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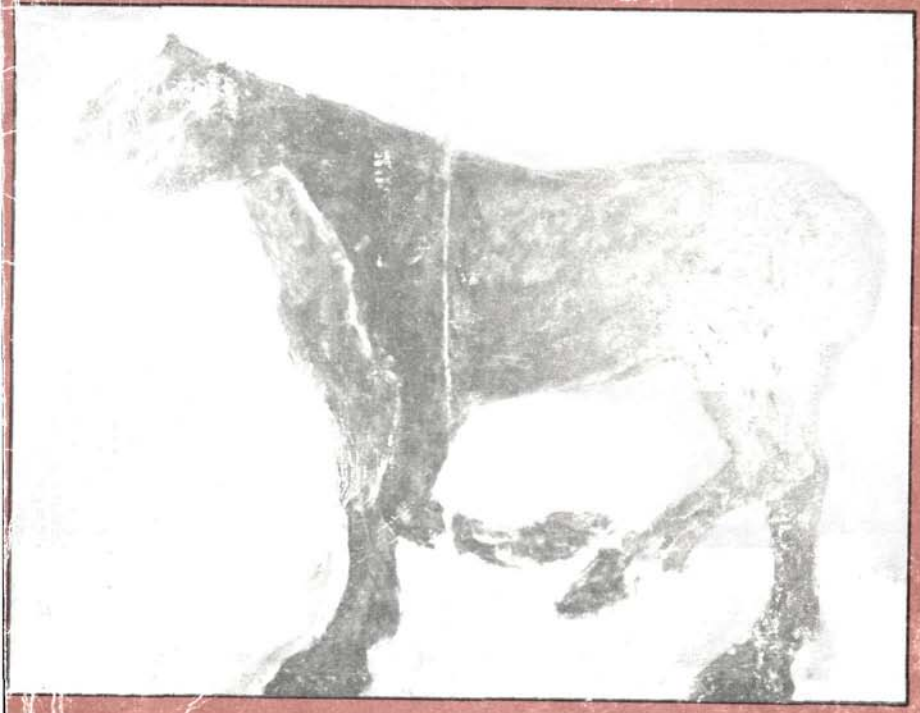

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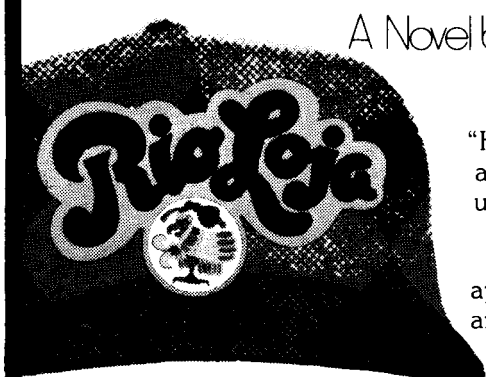

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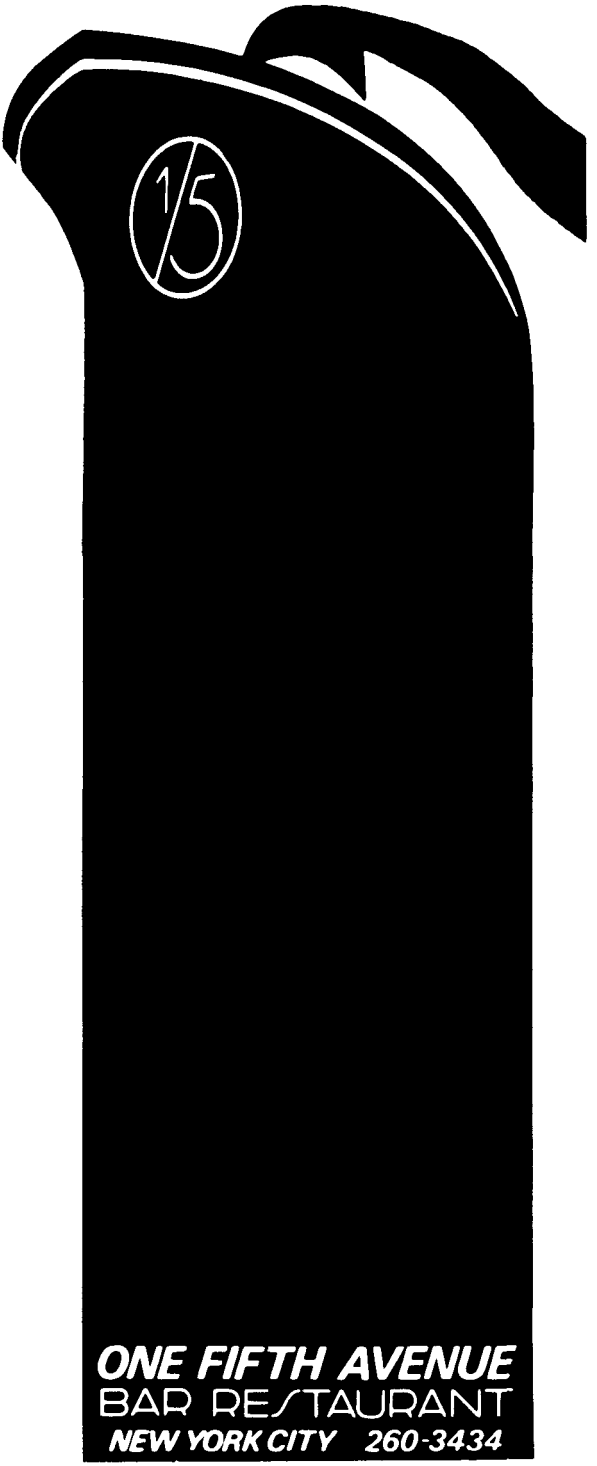

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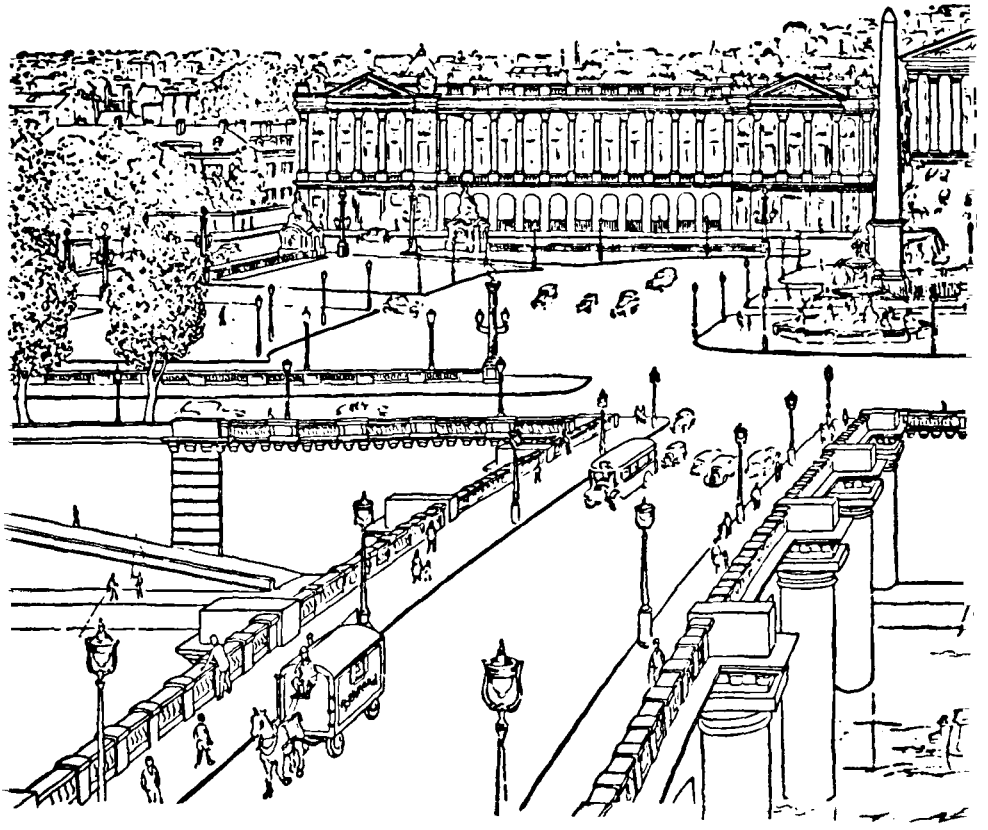

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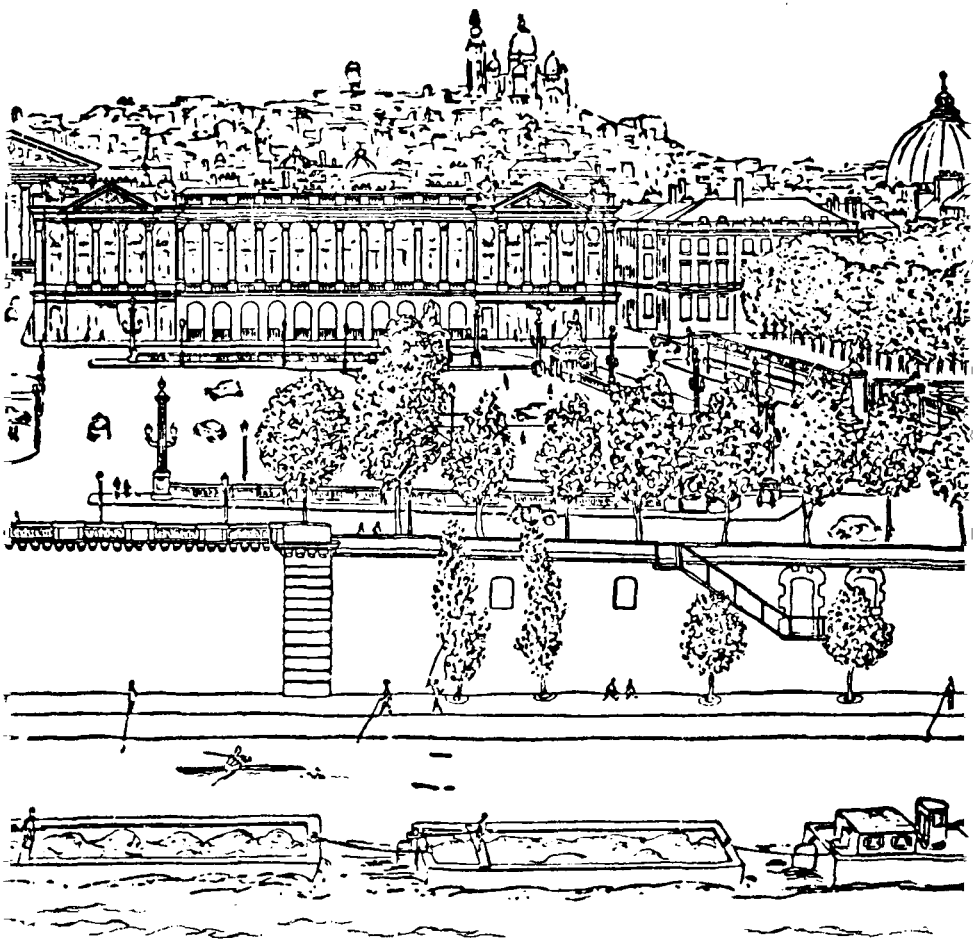

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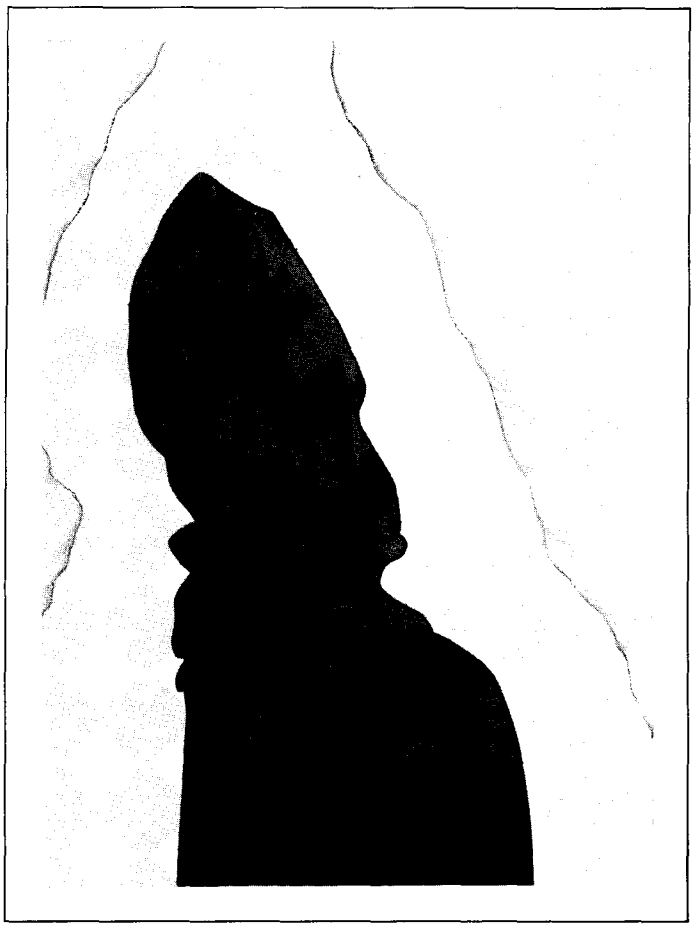

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Descent of Man

T. Coraghessan Boyle

I was living with a woman who suddenly began to stink. It was very difficult. The first time I confronted her she merely smiled. "Occupational hazard," she said. The next time she curled her lip. There were other problems too. Hairs, for instance. Hairs that began to appear on her clothing, sharp and black and brutal. Invariably I would awake to find these hairs in my mouth, or I would glance into the mirror to see them slashing like razor edges across the collars of my white shirts. Then too there was the fruit. I began to discover moldering bits of it about the house—apple and banana most characteristically—but plum and tangelo or even passionfruit and yim-yim were not at all anomalous. These fruit fragments occurred principally in the bedroom, on the pillow, surrounded by darkening spots. It was not long before I located their source: they lay hidden like gems in the long wild lanks of her hair. Another occupational hazard.

Jane was in the habit of sitting before the air-conditioner when she came home from work, fingering out her hair,

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drying the sweat from her face and neck in the cool hum of the machine, fruit bits sifting silently to the carpet, black hairs drifting like feathers. On these occasions the room would fill with the stink of her, bestial and fetid. And I would find my eyes watering, my mind imaging the dark rotting trunks of the rain forest, stained sienna and mandalay and hooker's green with the excrements dropped from above. My ears would keen with the whistling and crawing of the jungle birds, the screechings of the snot-nosed apes in the branches. And then, slack-faced and tight-boweled, I would step into the bathroom and retch, the sweetness of my own intestinal secrets a balm against the potent hairy stench of her.

One evening, just after her bath (the faintest odor lingered, yet still it was so trenchant I had to fight the impulse to get up and urinate on a tree or a post or something), I lay my hand casually across her belly and was suddenly startled to see an insect flit from its cover, skate up the swell of her abdomen, and bury itself in her navel. "Good Christ," I said.

"Hm?" she returned, peering over the cover of her Yerkish reader.

"That," I said. "That bug, that insect, that vermin."

She sat up, plucked the thing from its cachette, raised it to her lips and popped it between her front teeth. "Louse," she said, sucking. "Went down to the old age home on 13th Street to pick them up."

I anticipated her: "Not for—?"

"Why certainly, potpie—so Konrad can experience a tangible gratification of his social impulses during the grooming ritual. You know: you scratch my back, I scratch yours."

I lay in bed that night sweating, thinking about Jane and those slippery-fingered monkeys poking away at her, and listening for the lice crawling across her scalp or nestling their bloody little siphons in the tufts under her arms. Finally, about four, I got up and took three doriden. I woke at two in

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the afternoon, an insect in my ear. It was only an earwig. I had missed my train, failed to call in at the office. There was a note from Jane: Pick me up at 4. Konrad sends love.

The Primate Center stood in the midst of a macadamized acre or two, looking very much like a school building: faded brick, fluted columns, high mesh fences. Finger paintings and mobiles hung in the windows, misshapen ceramics crouched along the sills. A flag raggled at the top of a whitewashed flagpole. I found myself bending to examine the cornerstone: Asa Priff Grammar School, 1939. Inside it was dark and cool; the halls were lined with lockers and curling watercolors; the linoleum gleamed like a shy smile. I stepped into the BOYS' ROOM. The urinals were a foot and a half from the floor. Designed for little people, I mused. Youngsters. Hardly big enough to hold their little peters without the teacher's help. I smiled, and situated myself over one of the toy urinals, the strong honest scent of Pine-Sol in my nostrils. At that moment the door wheezed open and a chimpanzee shuffled in. He was dressed in shorts, shirt and bowtie. He nodded to me, it seemed, and made a few odd gestures with his hands as he moved up to the urinal beside mine. Then he opened his fly and pulled out an enormous slick red organ like a peeled banana. I looked away, embarrassed, but could hear him urinating mightily. It hissed against the porcelain like a thunderstorm, rattled the drain as it went down. My own water wouldn't come. I began to feel foolish. The chimp shook himself daintily, zippered up, pulled the plunger, crossed to the sink, washed and dried his hands, and left. I found I no longer had to go.

Out in the hallway the janitor was leaning on his flathead broom. The chimp stood before him gesticulating with a manic dexterity: brushing his forehead and tugging his chin, slapping his hands under his armpits, tapping his wrist, his tongue, his ear, his lip. The janitor watched intently. Suddenly—after a particularly virulent flurry—the man burst into laughter, rich braying globes of it. The chimp folded

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his lip and joined in, adding his weird nasal snickering to the janitor's barrel-laugh. I stood by the door to the BOYS' ROOM in a quandary. I began to feel that it might be wiser to wait in the car—but then I didn't want to call attention to myself, darting in and out like that. The janitor might think I was stealing paper towels or something. So I stood there, thinking to have a word with him when the chimp moved on—with the expectation that he could give me some grass-roots insight into the nature of Jane's job. But the chimp didn't move on. The two continued laughing, now harder than ever. The janitor's face was tear-streaked. Each time he looked up the chimp produced a gesticular flurry that would stagger him again. Finally the janitor wound down a bit, and still chuckling, held out his hands, palms up. The chimp flung his arms up over his head and then heaved them down again, rhythmically slapping the big palms with his own. "Right on! Mastuh Konrad," the janitor said, "Right on!" The chimp grinned, then hitched up his shorts and sauntered off down the hall. The janitor turned back to his broom, still chuckling.

I cleared my throat. The broom began a geometrically precise course up the hall toward me. It stopped at my toes, the ridge of detritus flush with the pinions of my wingtips. The janitor looked up. The pupil of his right eye was fixed in the corner, beneath the lid, and the white was red. There was an ironic gap between his front teeth. "Kin ah do sumfin fo yo, mah good man?" he said.

"I'm waiting for Miss Good."

"Ohhh, Miz *Good*," he said, nodding his head. "Fust ah taught yo was thievin paypuh tow-els out'n de Boys' Room but den when ah sees yo standin dere rigid as de Venus de Milo ah thinks to mahsef: he is some kinda new sculpture de students done made is what he is." He was squinting up at me and grinning like we'd just come back from sailing around the world together.

"That's a nice broom," I said.

He looked at me steadily, grinning still. "Yo's wonderin

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what me and Mastuh Konrad was jivin bout up dere, isn't yo? Well ah tells yo: he was relatin a hoomerous anecdote, de punch line o which has deep cosmic implications in dat it establishes a common ground between monks and ho-mo sapiens despite dere divergent ancestries." He shook his head, chortled. "Yes in-deed, dat Mastuh Konrad is quite the wit."

"You mean to tell me you actually understand all that lip-pulling and finger-waving?" I was beginning to feel a nameless sense of outrage.

"Oh sartinly, mah good man. Dat ASL."

"What?"

"ASL is what we was talkin. A-merican Sign Language. De-vel-oped for de deef n dumb. Yo sees, Mastuh Konrad is sumfin of a genius round here. He can comoonicate de mos esoteric ideas in bof ASL and Yerkish, re-spond to and trans-late English, French, German and Chinese. Fack, it was Miz Good was tellin me dat Konrad is workin right now on a Yerkish translation o Darwin's *De-scent o Man*. He is mainly into Anthro-pology, yo knows, but he has cultivated a in-ter-ess in udder fields too. Dis lass fall he done undertook a Yerkish translation o Chomsky's *Language and Mind* and Nietzsche's *Janseits von Gut und Böse*. And dat's some pretty heavy shit, Jackson."

I was hot with outrage. "Stuff," I said. "Stuff and non-sense."

"No sense in feelin personally treatened by Mastuh Konrad's chievements, mah good fellow—yo's got to rea-lize dat he is a genius."

A word came to me: "Bullhonk," I said. And turned to leave. The janitor caught me by the shirtsleeve. "He is now scorin his turd opera," he whispered. I tore away from him and stamped out of the building.

Jane was waiting in the car. I climbed in, cranked down the sunroof and opened the airvents.

At home I poured a water-glass of gin, held it to my

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nostrils and inhaled. Jane sat before the air-conditioner, her hair like a urinal mop, stinking. Black hairs cut the atmosphere, fruit bits whispered to the carpet. Occasionally the tip of my tongue entered the gin. I sniffed and tasted, thinking of plastic factories and turpentine distilleries and rich sulphurous smoke. On my way to the bedroom I poured a second glass.

In the bedroom I sniffed gin and dressed for dinner. "Jane?" I called. "Shouldn't you be getting ready?" She appeared in the doorway. She was dressed in her work clothes: jeans and sweatshirt. The sweatshirt was gray and hooded. There were yellow stains on the sleeves. I thought of the lower depths of animal cages, beneath the floor-meshing. "I figured I'd go like this," she said. I was knotting my tie. "And I wish you'd stop insisting on baths every night—I'm getting tired of smelling like a coupon in a detergent box. It's unnatural. Unhealthy."

In the car on the way to the restaurant I lit a cigar, a cheap twisted black thing like half a pepperoni. Jane sat hunched against her door, unwashed. I had never before smoked a cigar. I tried to start a conversation but Jane said she didn't feel like talking: talk seemed so useless, such an anachronism. We drove on in silence. And I reflected that this was not the Jane I knew and loved. Where, I wondered, was the girl who changed wigs three or four times a day and sported nails like a Chinese emperor?—and where was the girl who dressed like an Arabian bazaar and smelled like the trade winds?

She was committed. The project, the study, grants. I could read the signs: she was growing away from me.

The restaurant was dark, a maze of rocky gardens, pancake-leafed vegetation, black fountains. We stood squinting just inside the door. Birds whistled, carp hissed through the pools. Somewhere a monkey screeched. Jane put her hand on my shoulder and whispered in my ear. "Siamang," she said. At that moment the leaves parted beside us: a rubbery little fellow emerged and motioned us to sit on a bench beneath a

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wicker birdcage. He was wearing a soiled loincloth and eight or ten necklaces of yellowed teeth. His hair flamed out like a brushfire. In the dim light from the braziers I noticed his nostrils—both shrunken and pinched, as if once pierced straight-through. His face was of course inscrutable. As soon as we were seated he removed my socks and shoes, Jane's sneakers, and wrapped our feet in what I later learned were plantain leaves. I started to object—I bitterly resent anyone looking at my feet—but Jane shushed me. We had waited three months for reservations.

The maitre d' signed for us to follow, and led us through a dripping stonewalled tunnel to an outdoor garden where the flagstones gave way to dirt and we found ourselves on a narrow plant-choked path. He licked along like an iguana and we hurried to keep up. Wet fronds slapped back in my face, creepers snatched at my ankles, mud sucked at the plantain leaves on my feet. The scents of mold and damp and long-lying urine hung in the air, and I thought of the men's room at the subway station. It was dark as a womb. I offered Jane my hand, but she refused it. Her breathing was fast. The monkey chatter was loud as a zoo afire. "Far out," she said. I slapped a mosquito on my neck.

A moment later we found ourselves seated at a bamboo table overhung with branch and vine. Across from us sat Dr. and Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo, director of the Primate Center and wife. A candle guttered between them. I cleared my throat, and then began idly tracing my finger around the circular hole cut in the table's center. The Doctor's ears were the size of peanuts. "Glad you two could make it," he said. "I've long been urging Jane to sample some of our humble island fare." I smiled, crushed a spider against the back of my chair. The Doctor's English was perfect, pure Martha's Vineyard—he sounded like Ted Kennedy's insurance salesman. His wife's was weak: "Yes," she said, "nussing cook here, all roar." "How exciting!" said Jane. And then the conversation turned to primates, and the Center.

Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo and I smiled at one another. Jane and the

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Doctor were already deeply absorbed in a dialogue concerning the incidence of anal retention in chimps deprived of frisbee coordination during the sensorimotor period. I gestured toward them with my head and arched my eyebrows wittily. Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo giggled. It was then that Jane's proximity began to affect me. The close wet air seemed to concentrate her essence, distill its potency. The U-Hwak-Los seemed unaffected. I began to feel queasy. I reached for the fingerbowl and drank down its contents. Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo smiled. It was coconut oil. Just then the waiter appeared carrying a wooden bowl the size of a truck tire. A single string of teeth slapped against his breastbone as he set the bowl down and slipped off into the shadows. The Doctor and Jane were oblivious—they were talking excitedly, occasionally lapsing into what I took to be ASL, ear and nose and lip-picking like a manager and his third base coach. I peered into the bowl: it was filled to the rim with clean-picked chicken bones. Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo nodded, grinning: "No on-tray," she said. "Appeticer." At that moment a simian screamed somewhere close, screamed like death itself. Jane looked up. "Rhesus," she said.

On my return from the men's room I had some difficulty locating the table in the dark. I had already waded through two murky fountains and was preparing to plunge through my third when I heard Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo's voice behind me. "Here," she said. "Make quick, repass now serve." She took my hand and led me back to the table. "Oh, they're enormously resourceful," the Doctor was saying as I stumbled into my chair, pants wet to the knees. "They first employ a general anaesthetic—a distillation of the chu-bok root—and then the chef (who logically doubles as village surgeon) makes a circular incision about the macaque's cranium, carefully peeling back the already-shaven scalp, and stanching the blood-flow quite effectively with maura-ro, a highly absorbent powder derived from the tamana leaf. He then removes both the frontal and parietal plates to expose the brain . . ." I looked at Jane: she was rapt. I wasn't really

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listening. My attention was directed toward what I took to be the main course, which had appeared in my absence. An unsteady pinkish mound now occupied the center of the table, completely obscuring the circular hole—it looked like cherry vanilla yogurt, a carton and a half, perhaps two. On closer inspection I noticed several black hairs peeping out from around its flaccid edges. And thought immediately of the bush-headed maitre d'. I pointed to one of the hairs, remarking to Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo that the rudiments of culinary hygiene could be a little more rigorously observed among the staff. She smiled. Encouraged, I asked her what exactly the dish was. "Much delicacy," she said. "Very rare find in land of Lincoln." At that moment the waiter appeared and handed each of us a bamboo stick beaten flat and sharpened at one end.

". . . then the tribal elders or visiting dignitaries are seated around the table," the Doctor was saying. "The chef has previously of course located the macaque beneath the table, the exposed part of the creature's brain protruding from the hole in its center. After the feast, the lower ranks of the village population divide up the remnants. It's really quite efficient."

"*How fascinating!*" *said Jane.* "*Shall we try some?*"

"By all means . . . but tell me, how has Konrad been coming with that Yerkish epic he's been working up?"

Jane turned to answer, bamboo stick poised: "Oh I'm so glad you asked—I'd almost forgotten. He's finished his tenth book and tells me he'll be doing two more—out of deference to the Miltonic tradition. Isn't that a groove?"

"Yes," said the Doctor, gesturing toward the rosy lump in the center of the table. "Yes it is. He's certainly—and I hope you won't mind the pun—a brainy fellow. Ho-ho."

"Oh Doctor," Jane laughed, and plunged her stick into the pink. Beneath the table, in the dark, a tiny fist clutched at my pantleg.

I missed work again the following day. This time it took

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five doriden to put me under. I had lain in bed sweating and tossing, listening to Jane's quiet breathing, inhaling her fumes. At dawn I dozed off, dreamed briefly of elementary school cafeterias swarming with knickered chimps and weltered with trays of cherry vanilla yogurt, and woke stale-mouthed. Then I took the pills. It was three-thirty when I woke again. There was a note from Jane: Bringing Konrad home for dinner. Vacuum rug and clean toilet.

Konrad was impeccably dressed—long pants, platform wedgies, cufflinks. He smelled of eau de cologne, Jane of used litter. They arrived during the seven o'clock news. I opened the door for them. "Hello Jane," I said. We stood at the door, awkward, silent. "Well?" she said. "Aren't you going to greet our guest?" "Hello Konrad," I said. And then: "I believe we met in the boys' room at the Center the other day?" He bowed deeply, straight-faced, his upper lip like a halved canteloupe. Then he broke into a snicker, turned to Jane and juggled out an esoteric series of gestures. Jane laughed. Something caught in my throat. "Is he trying to say something?" I asked. "Oh potpie," she said, "it was nothing—just a little quote from Yeats."

"Yeats?"

"Yes, you know: 'An aged man is but a paltry thing.' "

Jane served watercress sandwiches and animal crackers as hors d'oeuvres. She brought them into the living room on a cut-glass serving tray and set them down before Konrad and me, where we sat on the sofa, watching the news. Then she returned to the kitchen. Konrad plucked up a tiny sandwich and swallowed it like a communion wafer, sucking the tips of his fingers. Then he lifted the tray and offered it to me. I declined. "No thank you," I said. Konrad shrugged, set the plate down in his lap and carefully stacked all the sandwiches in its center. I pretended to be absorbed with the news: actually I studied him, half-face. He was filling the gaps in his sandwich-construction with animal crackers. His lower lip

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protruded, his ears were rubbery, he was balding. With both hands he crushed the heap of crackers and sandwiches together and began kneading it until it took on the consistency of raw dough. Then he lifted the whole thing to his mouth and swallowed it without chewing. There were no whites to his eyes.

Konrad's only reaction to the newscast was a burst of excitement over a war story—the reporter stood against a wasteland of treadless tanks and recoilless guns in Thailand or Syria or Chile: huts were burning, old women weeping. "Wow-wow! eeeeeeee! er-er-er-er," Konrad said. Jane appeared in the kitchen doorway, hands dripping. "What is it, Konrad?" she said. He made a series of violent gestures. "Well?" I asked. She translated: "Konrad says that 'the pig oppressors' genocidal tactics will lead to their mutual extermination and usher in a new golden age . . .' "—here she hesitated, looked up at him to continue (he was springing up and down on the couch, flailing his fists as though they held whips and scourges)—" ' . . . of freedom and equality for all, regardless of race, creed, color—or genus.' I wouldn't worry," she added, "it's just his daily slice of revolutionary rhetoric. He'll calm down in a minute—he likes to play Che, but he's basically non-violent."

Ten minutes later Jane served dinner. Konrad, with remarkable speed and coordination, consumed four cans of fruit cocktail, thirty-two spareribs, half a dozen each of oranges, apples and pomegranates, two cheeseburgers and three quarts of chocolate malted. In the kitchen, clearing up, I commented to Jane about our guest's prodigious appetite. He was sitting in the other room, listening to *Don Juan*, sipping brandy. Jane said that he was a big, active male and that she could attest to his need for so many calories. "How much does he weigh?" I asked. "Stripped," she said, "one-eighty-one. When he stands up straight he's four-eight-and-three-quarters." I mulled over this information while I scraped away at the dishes, filed them in the dish-

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washer, neat ranks of blue china. A few moments later I stepped into the living room to observe Jane stroking Konrad's ears, his head in her lap. I stand five-seven, one-forty-three.

When I returned from work the following day, Jane was gone. Her dresser drawers were bare, the closet empty. There were white rectangles on the wall where her Rousseau reproductions had hung. The top plank of the bookcase was ribbed with the dust-prints of her Edgar Rice Burroughs collection. Her girls' softball trophy, her natural foods cookbook, her oaken cudgel, her moog, her wok: all gone. There were no notes. A pain jabbed at my sternum, tears started in my eyes. I was alone, deserted, friendless. I began to long even for the stink of her. On the pillow in the bedroom I found a fermenting chunk of pineapple. And sobbed.

By the time I thought of the Primate Center the sun was already on the wane. It was dark when I got there. Loose gravel grated beneath my shoes in the parking lot; the flag snapped at the top of its pole; the lights grinned lickerishly from the Center's windows. Inside the lighting was subdued, the building hushed. I began searching through the rooms, opening and slamming doors. The linoleum glowed all the way up the long corridor. At the far end I heard someone whistling "My Old Kentucky Home." It was the janitor. "Howdedo," he said. "Wut kin ah do fo yo at such a inauspicious hour o de night?"

I was candid with him. "I'm looking for Miss Good."

"Ohhh, she leave bout fo-turdy evy day—sartinly yo should be well apprised o dat fack."

"I thought she might be working late tonight."

"Noooo, no chance o dat." He was staring at the floor.

"Mind if I look for myself?"

"Mah good man, ah trusts yo is not intimatin dat ah would dis-kise de troof . . . far be it fum me to pre-varicate jus to proteck a young lady wut run off fum a man dat doan

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unnerstan her needs nor 'low her to spress de natchrul inclinations o her soul.''

At that moment a girlish giggle sounded from down the hall. Jane's girlish giggle. The janitor's right hand spread itself across my chest. ''Ah wooden insinuate mahsef in de middle o a highly sinificant speriment if ah was yo, Jackson,'' he said, hissing through the gap in his teeth. I pushed by him and started down the corridor. Jane's laugh leaped out again. From the last door on my left. I hurried. Suddenly the Doctor and his wife stepped from the shadows to block the doorway. ''Mr. Horne,'' said the Doctor, arms folded against his chest, ''take hold of yourself. We are conducting a series of experiments here that I simply cannot allow you to—''

''A fig for your experiments,'' I shouted. ''I want to speak to my, my——roommate.'' I could hear the janitor's footsteps behind me. ''Get out of my way, Doctor,'' I said. Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo smiled. I felt panicky. Thought of the Tong Wars. ''Is dey a problem here, Doc?'' the janitor said, his breath hot on the back of my neck. I broke. Grabbed the Doctor by his elbows, wheeled around and shoved him into the janitor. They went down on the linoleum like spastic skaters. I applied my shoulder to the door and battered my way in, Mrs. U-Hwak-Lo's shrill in my ear: ''You make big missake, Misser!'' Inside I found Jane, legs and arms bare, pinching a lab smock across her chest. She looked puzzled at first, then annoyed. She stepped up to me, made some rude gestures in my face. I could hear scrambling in the hallway behind me. Then I saw Konrad—in a pair of baggy BVD's. I grabbed Jane. But Konrad was there in an instant—he hit me like the grill of a Cadillac and I spun across the room, tumbling desks and chairs as I went. I slumped against the chalkboard. The door slammed: Jane was gone. Konrad swelled his chest, swayed toward me, the fluorescent lights hissing overhead, the chalkboard cold against the back of my neck. And I looked up into the black eyes, teeth, fur, rock-ribbed arms.

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Two Poems by Richard Grossman

Roach

My grandfather told me I
was one of the oldest living creatures.

I remember seeing him
frozen in an ice cube. All he could do was wink.
I dream about it whenever I move through something grey.

One of my brothers died from cleaning himself
with borax. Another screamed for help from inside
a wide-mouthed jar. There was nothing we could do.

At night when I come out of the wall
I am drawn by a desire for something dirty.
Something white, shiny, and filthy

like the light from the sun.

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Amoeba

I am the wisest animal.
I always stayed in the most important sense
right where I am.

At one time or another,
everybody specialized and went the wrong way developing
useless heads and arms to be
waved in the distance.

(A shark can bite off an arm
but I simply make its teeth dirty.)

Where there is no night and day
I move through a universe of shimmering particles
eating.

I have never died
and never will.

Every time I split I say goodbye to my eternal self.

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Vic Coccimiglio

Moon Child

You said you wanted to see
some baby pictures of me.
So here they are. Before you look at them
let me warn you, again, that I do not wish to show
you these, but since you insist, I hope
they make you content.

The first one is my birth picture.
You know the picture is not old
because I am not old: It is not faded out.
That is me; I was born without a head,
weighing in at 5 lbs. 3 ozs., though not premature.

(We can stop now, if you wish.)

Yes, that is me in my crib,
sleeping, if you cannot tell.
My parents said I was a good baby.
I never cried, getting them up
late at night.

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The next one is me on my first birthday
waving out the candle with my hands.
All that evening, they tell me, I played
with the balloons, putting them on top
of my neck. They said that the blue one
stayed on for the longest time.
Even back then blue was my favorite color.

Of course, that is my head.
What did you think that was under my baseball cap?
How old am I in that picture? Three years.

Perhaps, it is only fair to tell you
how my head came about. My mother
said that on the night of my third birthday
she was awakened by a banging sound.
She came into my room. I was hitting my neck
against the window in the direction of the moon.
The moon came closer and closer, until it filled
my entire window, almost blinding Mom.
When she looked up I had a head,
a real head with real eyes, real ears,
a real mouth, a real nose, and real hair.

The last one is my first grade picture.
Sorry if that smile seems silly,
but remember that I was still fascinated
with my mouth. That was my first real toy.

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Geof Hewitt

Murdering The New Neighbor's Kid

It was only a Daisy,
the kind sold by coupon off the backs of comic books:
Gee Dad it's a Daisy! he grins up at his father
from the package where—cradled like Jesus—lies the gun.
You can tell he's sincere and while the father's around
he merits the gun and carries it properly
never taking aim unless he seriously intends to shoot.
But one day dad goes to work and he can relax
so he sights in a squirrel, then panics as its gray heaving
slows at his feet: he pumps BB after BB through the eye,
each incomplete thud of the airgun
taking him further into his decision to end its suffering.

He forgets how painful killing was
within a year and he and Schulzy
take the Daisy down and grease her up
and go out on the prowl, first that glittering globe
—a basketball sized Xmas-like thing—
kept by some rich people on a concrete pedestal.
They crouch among the rhododendron leaves, he remembers
with satisfaction how it rose with a poof
and held its shape, briefly enlarged,
before collapsing, shattered, in a joyful tinkle
off its stand. Even as an adult
he drives that street and observes the pedestal, empty.

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What is it—two Saturdays—before they tire
of things and decide moving targets would be better?
And then almost floats into view
the new neighbors' kid pedaling his fat ass
along South Mountain Avenue, almost too far
to hit with BBs for sure, so they sight him in
& pump off maybe half a dozen shots each, Schulz
screaming cowboy style at the end running toward the road
waving the gun like a flag.
The kid, by now, is standing in the pedals,
his ass ballooning out behind him up & down
and Schulzy slows and takes his final aim.

2 hours later they see a cop car in his father's driveway
and decide to unscrew the barrel and hide all their BBs
then run outside dipping muzzle into earth
and airpoof it around in clear sight of the law,
two innocent kids who, by circumstance, happened to be
playing
with a harmless gun when Fat Ass was wounded.
But the cop breaks their story fast,
the one gun that was used is their Daisy.

Was it he or Schulz fired the shot
that made such a terrible bruise on the Markly boy's buttock?
Apologies heave up their throats throughout the confession
and the gun, at last, is taken away.

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Phil Boiarski

The Hilarious Beating

He said he was going to make this the worst beating
I had ever had, while pulling the split strop out
From its hiding place on the top shelf of the
Linen closet. Then, with its tails dangling
Before my eyes, he led me down the steps by the hair.

I was on the floor looking up at a giant,
Parallel aluminum clotheslines shone above his
Head and behind, the halo of a bare lightbulb.

He brought the leather down with everything he had.
The blow lifted me up from the floor and I screamed,
"Jesus, Daddy, Please stop. You're killing me."
He stopped and dropped his whip. He had said
It was going to hurt him more than it would hurt
Me. I got up feeling sorry for him.

His hands covered his face and muffled his
Breathing. I put my hand on his shaking shoulder.
I said, "It's all right. It hurt, but I'm all right."

He turned away quickly and I followed him to the
Bottom of the basement stairs. I touched him and said,
"Don't cry." He could hold it in no longer and
Broke out in the loudest laugh I have ever heard.
He told the story every time the family got together.

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Albert Stainton

When The Movie Theatre Closed

When the movie theatre closed
we decided to stay.
It was depressing, at first,
having almost no natural light,
but soon we learned to see
by the two plaster torches
on either side of the screen
that illuminated the scrolls
below and above them with pink.

And the food—
popcorn, of course, and candy—
endless cartons of popcorn
lightly coated in an oil
that, when we were younger,
seemed like butter.

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Sometimes I felt awkward
standing at the long row of urinals
alone. But later,
waiting for you in the lobby,
watching you come to me
almost as if you still had
alternatives, smiling in a way
that still seemed to be recognition,
calmed me.

And we had our high times, too—
re-running at regular intervals
the same old film that was left there,
watching those oversized faces
come together on the screen,
getting jittery on the coke
that never seemed to run dry.

And once involved in such strangeness,
such isolation,
we became convinced
that we could go on indefinitely,
that we had some secret, inner organ
others lacked—
indeed, that could make us famous.

We were wrong.

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Herbert Lovett

How to Abandon Ship

Do not rush.
Sudden sinkings have been rare,
though, eventually, the vessel does.
The *China Arrow,* torpedoed twice,
took over an hour.

Do not jump overboard.
Men have been burned to death
because they jumped overboard
and they jumped overboard
because they were not prepared.

Loosen your clothing.
Soak your wrists.
Have someone fan you.
To increase the circulation,
rub the skin with water.
Drink fluids in sips.

Take cigarettes.
There is magic in them.
The crazed second cook
who stepped out over the gunwale
to cross the street for some pineapples
might yet be alive today if he had had
some cigarettes to steady his nerves.

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Kill something.
Ensign Phil Richard's log read:
"June 9, 1942:
At four this afternoon,
we killed a small dolphin,
our first relief of any kind. . ."

Listen to advice.
Watertender R.G. Wallace reports:
One man was adrift on a crate.
We told him to swim to us
but he was afraid.
After we drifted apart, I heard his cries
for a while, but then
they were silenced.

Be gay.
In such a godless time
it is a duty.
When the *Titanic* sank,
the orchestra played to the end.
It is in this way
one saps the very roots of despair.

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Three Poems by Gary Soto

Graciela

Wedding night
Graciela bled lightly—
But enough to stain his thighs—
And left an alphabet
Of teethmarks on his arm.
At this, he was happy.
They drank mescal
In bed like the rich
And smoked cigarettes.
She asleep
And the bottle empty, he hid
A few coins in her left shoe,
Earrings in the right.
They worked long hours
Hoeing crooked rows of maize.
Evenings she wove rugs
And embroidered curtains
To market in Taxco.
In short they lived well.
However in the 7th month
With child, her belly
Rising like a portion of the sun,
Something knotted inside her.
The ribs ached.
A fever climbed like incense.
Manuel summoned the Parterna
And though she burned pepper,
And tied belts around
The stretched belly,
The child did not ease out.
Days later she turned
Onto her belly
And between her legs
Unraveled a spine of blood.

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Catalina Trevino Is Really From Heaven

Last night
At Mother Tomas',
We danced the
Chicken-with-its-head-chopped-off,
Her hands on my buttocks,
My crotch puffed
Like a lung
And holding its breath.
This wonderful woman
Stitched my neck
With kisses
And told secrets—
The silverware she stole,
Her spinster aunt
Living in Taxco, a former lover
With a heart condition.
I in turn, being educated
And a man of
Absolutely no wealth,
Whispered a line
Of bad poetry
And bit her left earlobe.
Afterwards we left
Arm in arm
For my room, for our clothes
Piled in a chair, and she
Fingering my belly-button,
I opening her legs
Like a large Bible,
The kingdom of hair.

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The Vision That Should Begin With A Beer

Ah, to rise one morning
With the ability
To strum a guitar
And with a voice
To say "Hola, mi Novia,"
Would be everything.
I am speaking of
Entering Hotel Avila
Where my drunk compadres
Applaud like hammers,
Where a scarf of smoke
Falls in their beer,
And I climb onto
A small stage.
The room quiets.
Tuning the guitar
I notice señorita Pacheco
Trying to be noticed,
Her legs crossed
And pumping
Softly like water.
I smile, light a cigarette.
She sips her drink.
I place the guitar
On my knee, flick
The cigarette,
And I play, brother, I play.

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The Valley

William Burroughs

In April of 1949, William Burroughs was arrested in New Orleans for "a pound of weed and a few caps of junk," as he later wrote. After a stay at Lexington for the cure, he was advised by his lawyer, Tige, that he and his family of three might return to the property in the Rio Grande Valley which he owned with his longtime friend Kells Elvins ("Evans" in this excerpt)—provided he was back in New Orleans for his court date in September. That May, in a letter to Jack Kerouac from Weed County, Texas, he wrote: "Things are real dull here. I don't even have a car. The Revenooers put the snatch on it in N.O. They are making efforts to condemn it, but I expect eventually my lawyer will wrest it from their sticky clutches. Meanwhile I am immobilized in this Valley of heat and boredom."

The following chapter about the Valley was written two or three years later in Mexico City, as part of the original manuscript of Junk, *Burroughs' first book. Ace Books, who published it in 1953, insisted the title be changed to* Junkie,

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thinking the reading public might somehow be misled by the original title. They also made 129 changes to milder language in the manuscript, as well as inserting pious disclaimers at seven places in the text, and deleted several thousand words of the text as being irrelevant to the desired "exposé" of the subject: junk. Despite these changes the book was an immediate success, selling 100,000 copies the first year and another half-million since.

This chapter, except for a few paragraphs, was entirely deleted from the 1953 edition and is here printed for the first time. Penguin Books U.S.A. will publish the complete and unexpurgated text this spring, under the title: Junky.

James Grauerholz

I left New Orleans several days later and went to the Rio Grande Valley. The Rio Grande Valley runs into the Gulf of Mexico at Brownsville. Sixty miles up river from Brownsville is the town of Mission. The Valley runs from Brownsville to Mission, a strip of ground sixty miles long and twenty miles wide. The area is irrigated from the Rio Grande River. Before irrigation, nothing grew here but mesquite and cactus. Now it is one of the richest farm areas in the U.S.

A three-lane highway runs from Brownsville to Mission, and the towns of the Valley string out along this highway. There are no cities in the Valley, and no country. The area is a vast suburb of flimsy houses. The Valley is flat as a table. Nothing grows there but crops, citrus and palms brought from California. A hot dry wind starts every afternoon and blows until sundown. The Valley is citrus country. Pink and red grapefruit grow there that will not grow anywhere else. Citrus country is real-estate-promoted country, country of "Bide-A-Wee" tourist courts and old people waiting around to die. The whole Valley has the impermanent look of a camp, or carnival. Soon the suckers will all be dead and the pitchmen will go somewhere else.

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During the Twenties, real estate operators brought trainloads of prospects down to the Valley and let them pick grapefruit right off the trees and eat it. One of these pioneer promoters is said to have constructed a large artificial lake and sold plots all around it: "The lake will sub-irrigate your groves." As soon as the last sale closed, he turned off the water and disappeared with his lake, leaving the prospects sitting there in a desert.

As put down by the realtor, citrus is a flawless set-up for old people who want to retire and take life easy. The grove owner does nothing. A citrus association cares for the grove and markets the fruit, and hands the owner a check. Actually, citrus is a risky deal for the small investor. Over a period of time the average return is high, especially on the pink and Ruby Red fruit. But a small operator cannot ride out the years when the prices are low, or the yield of fruit small.

A premonition of doom hangs over the Valley. You have to make it now before something happens, before the black fly ruins the citrus, before support prices are taken off the cotton, before the flood, the hurricane, the freeze, the long dry spell when there is no water to irrigate, before the Border Patrol shuts off your wetbacks. The threat of disaster is always there, persistent and disquieting as the afternoon wind. The Valley was desert, and it will be desert again. Meanwhile you try to make yours while there is still time.

Old men sitting in real estate offices say, "Well, this is nothing new. I've seen all this before. I remember back in '28. . . ."

But a new factor, something that nobody has seen before, is changing the familiar aspect of disaster like the slow beginnings of a disease, so that no one can say just when it began.

Death is absence of life. Wherever life withdraws, death and rot move in. Whatever it is—orgones, life force—that we all have to score for all the time, there is not much of it in the Valley. Your food rots before you can get it home. Milk sours before you can finish the meal. The Valley is a place where the new anti-life force is breaking through.

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Death hangs over the Valley like an invisible smog. The place exerts a curious magnetism on the moribund. The dying cell gravitates to the Valley:

Gary West came from Minneapolis. He had saved up twenty thousand dollars from operating a dairy farm during the War. With this money he bought a house and grove in the Valley. The place was on the far side of Mission, where irrigation stops and the desert begins. Five acres of Ruby Reds and a house in 1920 Spanish style. There he sat with his mother, his wife, and two children. In his eyes you could see the baffled, frightened, resentful looks of a man who feels the stirring in his cells of a fatal disease process. He was not sick at that time, but his cells were looking for death and West knew it. He wanted to sell out and leave the Valley.

"I feel closed in here. You have to go so far to get out of the Valley," he would say.

He began running from one project to another. A plantation in Mississippi, a winter vegetable set-up in Mexico. He went back to Minnesota and bought into a cow-feed company. He did this with the down payment on the sale of his Valley property. But he couldn't keep away from the Valley. He would run like a hooked fish until the drag of his dying cells tired him out, and the Valley reeled him in. He tried out various illnesses. A throat infection settled in his heart. He lay in the McAllen Hospital and tried to see himself as a man of business impatient to get up and back to work. His projects became more and more preposterous.

"That man is crazy," said Roy, the real estate man. "He don't know what he wants."

Only the Valley was real to West now. There was no other place for him to go. The other places were fantasy. Listening to him talk, you got the uncanny feeling that places like Milwaukee didn't exist. West rallied and went to look over a fifteen-dollar-per-acre sheep-raising set-up in Arkansas. He came back to the Valley and started building a house on credit. Something went wrong with his kidneys, and his body swelled up with urine. You could smell urine on his breath

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and through his skin. "This is uremic poisoning," exclaimed the doctor as the smell of urine filled the room. West went into convulsions and died. He left his wife a tangle of exchange notes between Milwaukee and the Valley that she will be ten years unravelling.

All the worst features of America have drained down to the Valley and concentrated there. In the whole area there is not one good restaurant. The food situation could only be tolerated by people who do not taste what they eat. In the Valley, restaurants are not operated by people who *are* cookers and purveyors of food. They are opened by somebody who decides that "people always eat" so a restaurant is a "good deal." His place will have a glass front so people can see in, and chromium fixtures. The food is bad U.S. restaurant food. So there he sits in his restaurant and looks at his customers with puzzled, resentful eyes. He didn't much want to run a restaurant anyway. Now he isn't even making money.

A lot of people made quick easy money during the War and for several years after. Any business was good, just as any stock is good on a rising market. People thought they were sharp operators, when actually they were just riding a lucky streak. Now the Valley is in a losing streak and only the big operators can ride it out. In the Valley economic laws work out like a formula in high school algebra, since there is no human element to interfere. The very rich are getting richer and all the others are going broke. The big holders are not shrewd or ruthless or enterprising. They don't have to say or think anything. All they have to do is sit and the money comes pouring in. You have to get up with the Big Holders or drop out and take any job they hand you. The middle class is getting the squeeze, and only one in a thousand will go up. The Big Holders are the house, and the small farmers are the players. The player goes broke if he keeps on playing, and the farmer has to play or lose to the Government by default. The Big Holders own all the Valley banks, and when the farmer goes broke the bank takes over. Soon the Big Holders will own the Valley.

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The Valley is like an honest dice table where the players do not have the vitality to influence the dice and they win or lose by pure chance. You never hear anyone say, "It had to happen that way," or when they do say it they are talking about a death. An event that "had to happen that way" may be good or bad, but there it is, and you cannot regret it or rehash it. Since everything that happens in the Valley—except death—happens by chance, the inhabitants are always tampering with the past like the two-dollar bettor on the return train from the track: "I should have hung on to that hundred acres on the lower lift; I should have took up them oil leases; I should have planted cotton instead of tomatoes." A nasal whine goes up from the Valley, a vast muttering of banal regret and despair.

When I arrived in the Valley, I was still in the post-cure drag. I had no appetite and no energy. All I wanted to do was sleep, and I slept twelve to fourteen hours a day. Occasionally I bought two ounces of paregoric, drank it with two goof balls and felt normal for several hours. You have to sign for P.G. when you buy it, and I did not want to burn down the drugstores. You can only buy P.G. so often, or the druggist gets wise. Then he packs in, or ups the price.

I had gone into partnership with a friend named Evans to buy machinery, hire a farmer and raise a cotton crop. We had a hundred and fifty acres in cotton. Good cotton land will pick a bale to an acre, and the U.S. support price guaranteed us a hundred and fifty dollars to a bale. So we stood to gross about $22,000. The farmer did all the actual work. Evans and I would drive around every few days to see how the cotton was looking. It took us about an hour to look at all our cotton because the fields were scattered around from Edingburg to the lower lift, almost on the river. There was no particular point in looking at the cotton since neither of us knew the first thing about it. We just drove around to pass the time until five p.m., when we started drinking.

There were five or six regulars who gathered every afternoon at Evans' house. Exactly at five, someone would bang a

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tin pan and yell "Drinking time!" and the others would jump up like fighters coming out at the bell. We made our own gin from Mexican alcohol as a measure of economy. Martinis mixed with this gin had a terrible taste, and you had to fill the cocktail with pieces of ice or it would be warm before you could get it down. I cannot drink even good martinis in hot weather, so I made myself a long drink with sugar and lime and seltzer and a tiny pinch of quinine to approximate gin and tonic. No one in the Valley had ever heard of quinine water.

All that summer was perfect cotton weather. Hot and dry, day after day. We started picking after the Fourth of July and all our cotton was off by the September 1st deadline. We broke a little better than even. High operating costs and the high cost of living—I figured it was costing me about seven hundred a month to live in that valley without a maid or a car—took most of the profit. I decided it was time to pull out of the Valley.

Early in October, I got a letter from the bonding company saying my case was coming up in four days. I called Tige and he said, "Pay no attention. I will get a continuance." A few days later I got a letter from Tige saying that he had scored for a three-week continuance, but was doubtful of getting the trial put off again.

I called him on the phone and told him I was taking a trip to Mexico. He said, "Fine. You just have as good a time as you can in three weeks and be back here for the trial."

I asked him how were the chances of another continuance.

He said, "Frankly, not good. I can't do a thing with this judge. His ulcers are bothering him."

I decided to take steps to remain in Mexico when I got there.

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John Logan

The Bridge of Change

(For Roger Aplon)

"The bridge, barely curved,
that connects the terrible
with the tender."—Rilke

I

The children play at the Luxembourg fountain.
Their small ships catch wind and sail out and come round
again.

II

Sometime between 250 and 200 B.C.
Fishermen and boatmen of the tribe Parisii
discovered, and built their huts on, the largest island
in the River Seine. Celtic *Lutetia,* "Town surrounded by water,"
thus was born there.
The island is shaped like a boat—
and this figure became a part
of the capital's coat-of-arms. So this was the start
of The City first named for its engulfing water
(on whose economy it depended), then after
the people themselves: members of the tribe of Paris.
We listen to these water folk and know they hear us,
for we are all born out of boats and out of water.
The first sound we hear is the heart
knocking quiet as a boat docks:
And we all dissolve to island earth and tears later.

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III

And into air and fire! Once in the Latin Quarter
in a space formed for him by waves and bright loiterers
near that shortest street named for the Cat Who Catches Fish—
or who (with slight inflection) "sins"—
I watched a dark young man, naked to his thin waist, push
long plumes of flame into the air
above our awed faces raised there.
From the sharp heat inside and out,
his head and chest glowed in the night
with an aura of oil or sweat.
Thirsting, he drank again from a sponge of kerosene
and breathed out long strings of fire and smoke into the Street
of The Harp.
Dark ash dropped back upon his face and cap,
which lay open on the cobbled road waiting for coins
from all who guessed at the mystery in what he'd done.
He built a vast pillar of fire as if to guide us.
then suddenly stopped, walked across
the space, and kissed a reaching child
(to bless and heal that amazed head),
waved gratefully to us who now filled his cap with alms,
and smiling and burned (I saw scars beneath his raised arm)
he sail
ed up that narrowing street in a wildly bal-
looning white shirt we had watched him casually don
to cover his vestment of skin.

IV

For centuries that old City
ended at its west boundary
in a small archipelago
separated from the main island by the Seine's two
arms. It was on one of these small islets that Phillip
the Fair about the year 1314 had raised up
a stake for the grand master, Order of Templars, whom
he condemned, then from the palace window watched him
burn.

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These little islands, quickened with their ghost victim's
screams,
were joined in the sixteenth century by the decree
of Henry Third (and by a great engineering feat
Faust could envy) to the main island of The City.
This new western tip was given the name of a park,
"Vert Galant," nickname of Henry Fourth: "the Gay Old
Spark."
Near there I watched in a loud street
a white haired man stand with one foot
on the curb, the other in the cobbled street, and play
an old mandolin. He was dressed in a black and frayed
tuxedo and played with intense passion, sadly, but
this desperate, dignified man transformed by his art
and by poverty (his case kept open for money)
could not play the mandolin—He
just strummed the same chord again
and again and again...

V

It was also Phillip the Fair
who created an aristocratic prison air
by building the blocks-long Gothic Conciergerie.
The best view is from the Right Bank: The Slaughter House
Quay
(which now is a market for pets).
You can see the four recently cleaned towers reflect-
ed in the Seine. (At the Seine in fall beneath the red
and gold leaves you see the rust, mahogany and beige
boats gently jostle together at the shore and wait).
On the right: the crenelated Bonbec Tower stays.
Bonbec means "babbler" for this place
was used through the centuries as a torture chamber.
The right one of the twin towers, Argent, held treasure.
Still the gorgeous Horloge Tower on the left corner
of the ancient building across from The Bridge of Change
houses the giant clock which gave its name to that quay:

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in its field of blue the many great gold fleurs de lys
and the two life-sized mythical
women, one with a fascicle
of wheat, one with a balanced scale raised high in the clock,
whose silver chime used to toll the hours for the monarch.
(This was melted down in those days when the Terror struck.)
In this turreted place we have shaved the graceful neck
and head of Marie Antoinette, ripped her white, ruffled
collar wide and wrapped the cuff of
rope about her hands behind her back. We made her face
the casual knitting women and men making fists
sitting on steps in the "May Court"
(where a fresh tree was placed each spring by the lawyer's
clerks!)
on her way to the guillotine. Its blade was heavy
as primeval stone: she, the chemist Lavoisier,
Charlotte Corday, poet and brother Andre Chenier,
Madame du Barry—all 2600 who died,
having said their last farewells in the Women's Courtyard,
twelve per day underneath the blade!
and some were disembowelled beside.
Was there sometimes an image of beauty in their minds
at the last? Perhaps on white sands
beside the blue black sea a matched pair of roan horses
galloping together in the bright spume, riderless.
Or a nude young man and woman lying together
touching in a field of flowers?

VI

Nearby on this Island the gargoyles of Notre Dame
gawk in ancient horror and some
forever gnaw on stone rabbits in the parapets
or wail in winged, formal misery outside the set
limits of the orthodox Church—
all glory happening within the walls where they squat:
so hunched, so beaked, so horrorstruck.

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VII

A wing of the May Courtyard where the condemned waited
"Monsieur de Paris" as executioners were named
now adjoins the building of glass and light, with no walls,
it seems, jewel of Sainte Chapelle,
its windows of rose and blue, gold, green, yellow, purple,
rising fifty feet:
its spire piercing the foliate,
layered, manycolored egg of the vault of heaven,
showering all the primal hues and shadows given—
bright as the truth reflected in a drop of fresh blood
or the colors of the body's inner organs hid-
den before the sure explosion of light that hits them
at the moment of violent death—This is a time
like that of the sun that once a year just at the dawn
of winter solstice lights up an ancient Celtic stone
grave striking the bones spread on shelves
with all the colors of the flesh.

VIII

Who can stand these juxtapositions of person and place and
time?
I walk across the Bridge of Change where I have so often
watched
by the towers of the Conciergerie. Now, water laves a little
higher
up the stair from the River to the Quay, hiding some of the
steps
from me. Boats nudge at the edge. I walk along the Boulevard
past the great gold and blue corner clock, the ornate wrought-
iron
gate and fence of the Palace of Justice, (its name changed
from the
time of kings), past the shadow and spire of Sainte Chapelle. I
cross the Bridge of Saint Michel into the Latin Quarter.
But I do
not look for the Street of the Cat Who Fishes or the Street of the

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Harp. I turn right, wandering a bit, and suddenly as if by
chance
find myself at *this* street, and here I will wait, for it is our
street,
Rue Gît le Coeur: Here Lies the Heart.

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SPIT AND IMAGE

1

INTRODUCTION

It was the childishness of my father, finally, that spoiled Heaven for me. We could be any age we wished back there, provided we had actually attained that age in life on Earth. I myself elected to be thirty-three most of the time, which would have been a comfortable way to spend Eternity -- if only Father hadn't tagged after me everywhere in the shape of a runty, unhappy nine-year-old.

"Father," I would say to him in Heaven, "for the love of God grow up!"

But he would not grow up.

So, just to get away from him, I volunteered to return to Earth as a doppelganger, a spook whose business it is to let certain people know that they are about to die.

I make myself into a near-double of a doomed person, and then show myself to him very briefly. He invariably gets my message: That he is about to die.

****

Yes, and about once every six months I turn into a poltergeist, which is simply a spook who throws a tantrum. Suddenly I can't stand the Universe and my place in it, and the way it's being run. So I become invisible, and go into somebody's house or apartment, and dump tables and chairs and breakfronts and so on, and throw books and bric-a-brac around.

[illegible]

Manuscript page from *Spit and Image*, a novel-in-progress by Kurt Vonnegut.

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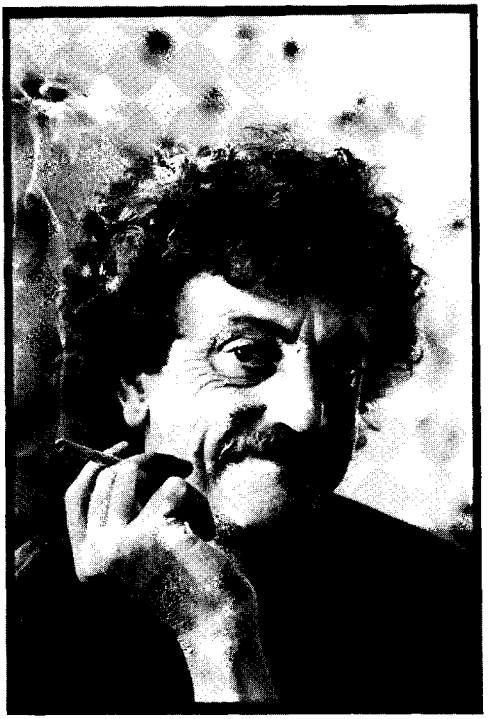

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Kurt Vonnegut
The Art of Fiction LXIV

This interview with Kurt Vonnegut was originally a composite of four *interviews done with the author over the past decade. The composite has gone through an extensive working-over by the subject himself, who looks upon his own spoken words on the page with considerable misgivings . . . indeed, what follows can be considered an interview conducted with himself, by himself.*

The introduction to the first of the incorporated interviews (done in West Barnstable, Massachusetts, when Vonnegut was 44) reads: "he is a veteran and a family man, large-boned, loose-jointed, at ease. He camps in an armchair in a shaggy tweed jacket, Cambridge gray flannels, a blue Brooks

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Brothers shirt, slouched down, his hands stuffed into his pockets. He shells the interview with explosive coughs and sneezes, windages of an autumn cold and a lifetime of heavy cigarette smoking. His voice is a resonant baritone, Midwestern, wry in its inflections. From time to time he issues the open alert smile of a man who has seen and reserved within himself almost everything: depression, war, the possibility of violent death, the inanities of corporate public relations, six children, an irregular income, long-delayed recognition.''

The last of the interviews which made up the composite was conducted during the summer of 1976, years after the first. The description of him at this time reads: '' . . . he moves with the low-keyed amiability of an old family dog. In general, his appearance is tousled: the long curly hair, moustache and sympathetic smile suggest a man at once amused and saddened by the world around him. He has rented the Gerald Murphy house for the summer. He works in the little bedroom at the end of a hall where Murphy, artist, bon vivant, *and friend to the artistic great, died in 1964. From his desk Vonnegut can look out onto the front lawn through a small window; behind him is a large, white canopy bed. On the desk next to the typewriter is a copy of Andy Warhol's* Interview, *Clancy Sigal's* Zone of the Interior, *and several discarded cigarette packs.*

''Vonnegut has chain-smoked Pall Malls since 1936 and during the course of the interview he smokes the better part of one pack. His voice is low and gravelly, and as he speaks, the incessant procedure of lighting the cigarettes and exhaling smoke is like punctuation in his conversation. Other distractions such as the jangle of the telephone, and the barking of a small, shaggy dog named 'Pumpkin,' do not detract from Vonnegut's good-natured disposition. Indeed, as Dan Wakefield once said of his fellow Shortridge High School alumnus: 'He laughed a lot and was kind to everyone.' ''

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INTERVIEWER

You are a veteran of the Second World War?

VONNEGUT

Yes. I want a military funeral when I die—the bugler, the flag on the casket, the ceremonial firing squad, the hallowed ground.

INTERVIEWER

Why?

VONNEGUT

It will be a way of achieving what I've always wanted more than anything—something I could have had, if only I'd managed to get myself killed in the war.

INTERVIEWER

Which is—?

VONNEGUT

The unqualified approval of my community.

INTERVIEWER

You don't feel that you have that now?

VONNEGUT

My relatives say that they are glad I'm rich, but that they simply cannot read me.

INTERVIEWER

You were an infantry batallion scout in the war?

VONNEGUT

Yes, but I took my basic training on the 240-millimeter howitzer.

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INTERVIEWER

A rather large weapon.

VONNEGUT

The largest mobile field piece in the Army at that time. This weapon came in six pieces, each piece dragged wallowingly by a Caterpillar tractor. Whenever we were told to fire it, we had to build it first. We practically had to invent it. We lowered one piece on top of another, using cranes and jacks. The shell itself was about nine-and-a-half inches in diameter and weighed three hundred pounds. We constructed a miniature railway which would allow us to deliver the shell from the ground to the breech, which was about eight feet above grade. The breech-block was like the door on the vault of a savings and loan association in Peru, Indiana, say.

INTERVIEWER

It must have been a thrill to fire such a weapon.

VONNEGUT

Not really. We would put the shell in there, and then we would throw in bags of very slow and patient explosives. They were damp dog-biscuits, I think. We would close the breech, and then trip a hammer which hit a fulminate of mercury percussion cap, which spit fire at the damp dog biscuits. The main idea, I think, was to generate steam. After a while, we could hear these cooking sounds. It was a lot like cooking a turkey. In utter safety, I think, we could have opened the breechblock from time to time, and basted the shell. Eventually, though, the howitzer always got restless. And finally it would heave back on its recoil mechanism, and it would have to expectorate the shell. The shell would come floating out like the Goodyear blimp. If we had had a stepladder, we could have painted "Fuck Hitler" on the shell as it left the gun. Helicopters could have taken after it and shot it down.

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INTERVIEWER

The ultimate terror weapon.

VONNEGUT

Of the Franco-Prussian War.

INTERVIEWER

But you were ultimately sent overseas not with this instrument but with the 106th Infantry Division—

VONNEGUT

"The Bag Lunch Division." They used to feed us a lot of bag lunches. Salami sandwiches. An orange.

INTERVIEWER

In combat?

VONNEGUT

When we were still in the States.

INTERVIEWER

While they trained you for the infantry?

VONNEGUT

I was never trained for the infantry. Batallion scouts were elite troops, see. There were only six in each batallion, and nobody was very sure about what they were supposed to do. So we would march over to the rec room every morning, and play ping-pong and fill out applications for Officer Candidate School.

INTERVIEWER

During your basic training, though, you must have been familiarized with weapons other than the howitzer.

VONNEGUT

If you study the 240-millimeter howitzer, you don't even

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have time left over for a venereal disease film.

INTERVIEWER

What happened when you reached the front?

VONNEGUT

I imitated various war movies I'd seen.

INTERVIEWER

Did you shoot anybody in the war?

VONNEGUT

I thought about it. I did fix my bayonet once, fully expecting to charge.

INTERVIEWER

Did you charge?

VONNEGUT

No. If everybody else had charged, I would have charged, too. But we decided not to charge. We couldn't see anybody.

INTERVIEWER

This was during the Battle of the Bulge, wasn't it? It was the largest defeat of American arms in history.

VONNEGUT

Probably. My last mission as a scout was to find our own artillery. Usually, scouts go out and look for enemy stuff. Things got so bad that we were finally looking for our own stuff. If I'd found our own batallion commander, everybody would have thought that was pretty swell.

INTERVIEWER

Do you mind describing your capture by the Germans?

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VONNEGUT

Gladly. We were in this gully about as deep as a World War I trench. There was snow all around. Somebody said we were probably in Luxembourg. We were out of food.

INTERVIEWER

Who was "we?"

VONNEGUT

Our batallion scouting unit. All six of us. And about fifty people we'd never met before. The Germans could see us, because they were talking to us through a loudspeaker. They told us our situation was hopeless, and so on. That was when we fixed bayonets. It was nice there for a few minutes.

INTERVIEWER

How so?

VONNEGUT

Being a porcupine with all those steel quills. I pitied anybody who had to come in after us.

INTERVIEWER

But they came in anyway?

VONNEGUT

No. They sent in eighty-eight millimeter shells instead. The shells burst in the treetops right over us. Those were very loud bangs right over our heads. We were showered with splintered steel. Some people got hit. Then the Germans told us again to come out. We didn't yell "nuts" or anything like that. We said, "Okay," and "Take it easy," and so on.

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When the Germans finally showed themselves, we saw they were wearing white camouflage suits. We didn't have anything like that. We were olive drab. No matter what season it was, we were olive drab.

INTERVIEWER

What did the Germans say?

VONNEGUT

They said the war was all over for us, that we were lucky, that we could now be sure we would live through the war, which was more than they could be sure of. As a matter of fact, they were probably killed or captured by Patton's Third Army within the next few days. Wheels within wheels.

INTERVIEWER

Did you speak any German?

VONNEGUT

I had heard my parents speak it a lot. They hadn't taught me how to do it, since there had been such bitterness in America against all things German during the First World War. I tried a few words I knew on our captors, and they asked me if I was of German ancestry, and I said, "Yes." They wanted to know why I was making war against my brothers.

INTERVIEWER

And you said—?

VONNEGUT

I honestly found the question ignorant and comical. My parents had separated me so thoroughly from my Germanic

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past that my captors might as well have been Bolivians or Tibetans, for all they meant to me.

INTERVIEWER

After you were captured, you were shipped to Dresden?

VONNEGUT

In the same boxcars that had brought up the troops that captured us—probably in the same boxcars that had delivered Jews and Gypsies and Jehovah's Witnesses and so on to the extermination camps. Rolling stock is rolling stock. British mosquito bombers attacked us at night a few times. I guess they thought we were strategic materials of some kind. They hit a car containing most of the officers from our batallion. Every time I say I hate officers, which I still do fairly frequently, I have to remind myself that practically none of the officers I served under survived. Christmas was in there somewhere.

INTERVIEWER

And you finally arrived in Dresden.

VONNEGUT

In a huge prison camp south of Dresden first. The privates were separated from the non-coms and officers. Under the articles of the Geneva Convention, which is a very Edwardian document, privates were required to work for their keep. Everybody else got to languish in prison. As a private, I was shipped to Dresden . . .

INTERVIEWER

What were your impressions of the city itself before the bombing?

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VONNEGUT

The first fancy city I'd ever seen. A city full of statues and zoos, like Paris. We were living in a slaughterhouse, in a nice new cement-block hog barn. They put bunks and straw mattresses in the barn, and we went to work every morning as contract labor in a malt syrup factory. The syrup was for pregnant women. The damned sirens would go off and we'd hear some other city getting it—*whump a whump a whumpa whump*. We never expected to get it. There were very few air raid shelters in town and no war industries, just cigarette factories, hospitals, clarinet factories. Then a siren went off—it was February 13, 1945—and we went down two stories under the pavement into a big meat locker. It was cool there, with cadavers hanging all around. When we came up the city was gone.

INTERVIEWER

You didn't suffocate in the meat locker?

VONNEGUT

No. It was quite large, and there weren't very many of us. The attack didn't sound like a hell of a lot either. *Whump*. They went over with high explosives first to loosen things up, and then scattered incendiaries. When the war started, incendiaries were fairly sizeable, about as long as a shoebox. By the time Dresden got it, they were tiny little things. They burnt the whole damn town down.

INTERVIEWER

What happened when you came up?

VONNEGUT

Our guards were noncoms—a sergeant, a corporal, and

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four privates—and leaderless. Cityless, too, because they were Dresdeners who'd been shot up on the front and sent home for easy duty. They kept us at attention for a couple of hours. They didn't know what else to do. They'd go over and talk to each other. Finally we trekked across the rubble and they quartered us with some South Africans in a suburb. Every day we walked into the city and dug into basements and shelters to get the corpses out, as a sanitary measure. When we went into them, a typical shelter, an ordinary basement usually, looked like a streetcar full of people who'd simultaneously had heart failure. Just people sitting there in their chairs, all dead. A fire storm is an amazing thing. It doesn't occur in nature. It's fed by the tornadoes that occur in the midst of it and there isn't a damned thing to breathe. We brought the dead out. They were loaded on wagons and taken to parks, large open areas in the city which weren't filled with rubble. The Germans got funeral pyres going, burning the bodies to keep them from stinking and from spreading disease. 130,000 corpses were hidden underground. It was a terribly elaborate Easter egg hunt. We went to work through cordons of German soldiers. Civilians didn't get to see what we were up to. After a few days the city began to smell, and a new technique was invented. Necessity is the mother of invention. We would bust into the shelter, gather up valuables from people's laps without attempting identification, and turn the valuables over to guards. Then soldiers would come in with a flame thrower and stand in the door and cremate the people inside. Get the gold and jewelry out and then burn everybody inside.

INTERVIEWER

What an impression on someone thinking of becoming a writer!

VONNEGUT

It was a fancy thing to see, a startling thing. It was a moment of truth, too, because American civilians and ground troops didn't know American bombers were engaged in

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saturation bombing. It was kept a secret until very close to the end of the war. One reason they burned down Dresden is that they'd already burned down everything else. You know: "What're we going to do tonight?" Here was everybody all set to go, and Germany still fighting, and this machinery for burning down cities was being used. It was a secret, burning down cities—boiling pisspots and flaming prams. There was all this hokum about the Norden bombsight. You'd see a newsreel showing a bombadier with an MP on either side of him holding a drawn .45. That sort of nonsense, and hell, all they were doing was just flying over cities, hundreds of airplanes, and dropping everything. When I went to the University of Chicago after the war the guy who interviewed me for admission had bombed Dresden. He got to that part of my life story and he said, "Well, we hated to do it." The comment sticks in my mind.

INTERVIEWER

Another reaction would be, "We were ordered to do it."

VONNEGUT

His was more humane. I think he felt the bombing was necessary, and it may have been. One thing everybody learned is how fast you can rebuild a city. The engineers said it would take 500 years to rebuild Germany. Actually it took about 18 weeks.

INTERVIEWER

Did you intend to write about it as soon as you went through the experience?

VONNEGUT

When the city was demolished I had no idea of the scale of the thing. . . . Whether this was what Bremen looked like or Hamburg, Coventry . . . I'd never seen Coventry, so I had no scale except for what I'd seen in movies. When I got home (I was a writer since I had been on the *Cornell Sun* except that

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was the extent of my writing) I thought of writing my war story, too. All my friends were home; they'd had wonderful adventures, too. I went down to the newspaper office, the Indianapolis *News*, and looked to find out what they had about Dresden. There was an item about half an inch long, which said our planes had been over Dresden and two had been lost. And so I figured, well, this really was the most minor sort of detail in World War II. Others had so much more to write about. I remember envying Andy Rooney who jumped into print at that time; I didn't know him, but I think he was the first guy to publish his war story after the war; it was called *Tail Gunner*. Hell, I never had any classy adventure like that. But every so often I would meet a European and we would be talking about the war and I would say I was in Dresden; he'd be astonished that I'd been there, and he'd always want to know more. Then a book by David Irving was published about Dresden, saying it was the largest massacre in European history. I said, By God, I saw something after all! I would try to write my war story, whether it was interesting or not, and try to make something out of it. I describe that process a little in the beginning of *Slaughterhouse 5;* I saw it as starring John Wayne and Frank Sinatra. Finally, a girl called Mary O'Hare, the wife of a friend of mine who'd been there with me, said, "You were just children then. It's not fair to pretend that you were men like Wayne and Sinatra and it's not fair to future generations because you're going to make war look good." That was a very important clue to me.

INTERVIEWER

That sort of shifted the whole focus . . .

VONNEGUT

She freed me to write about what infants we really were: 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. We were baby-faced, and as a prisoner of war I don't think I had to shave very often. I don't recall that that was a problem.

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INTERVIEWER

One more war question; do you still think about the firebombing of Dresden at all?

VONNEGUT

I wrote a book about it, called *Slaughterhouse-Five.* The book is still in print, and I have to do something about it as a businessman now and then. Marcel Ophuls asked me to be in his film, *A Memory of Justice.* He wanted me to talk about Dresden as an atrocity. I told him to talk to my friend Bernard V. O'Hare, Mary's husband, instead, which he did. O'Hare was a fellow batallion scout, and then a fellow prisoner of war. He's a lawyer in Pennsylvania now.

INTERVIEWER

Why didn't you wish to testify?

VONNEGUT

I had a German name. I didn't want to argue with people who thought Dresden should have been bombed to hell. All I ever said in my book was that Dresden, willy-nilly, *was* bombed to hell.

INTERVIEWER

It was the largest massacre in European history?

VONNEGUT

It was the fastest killing of large numbers of people—one hundred and thirty-five thousand people in a matter of hours. There were slower schemes for killing, of course.

INTERVIEWER

The death camps.

VONNEGUT

Yes—in which millions were eventually killed. Many people see the Dresden massacre as correct and quite minimal

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revenge for what had been done by the camps. Maybe so. As I say, I never argue that point. I do note in passing that the death penalty was applied to absolutely anybody who happened to be in the undefended city—babies, old people, the zoo animals, and thousands upon thousands of rabid Nazis, of course, and, among others, my best friend Bernard V. O'Hare and me. By all rights, O'Hare and I should have been part of the body count. The more bodies, the more correct the revenge.

INTERVIEWER

The Franklin Library is bringing out a de luxe edition of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, I believe.

VONNEGUT

Yes. I was required to write a new introduction for it.

INTERVIEWER

Did you have any new thoughts?

VONNEGUT

I said that only one person on the entire planet benefited from the raid, which must have cost tens of millions of dollars. The raid didn't shorten the war by half a second, didn't weaken a German defense or attack anywhere, didn't free a single person from a death camp. Only one person benefited —not two or five or ten. Just one.

INTERVIEWER

And who was that?

VONNEGUT

Me. I got three dollars for each person killed. Imagine that.

INTERVIEWER

How much affinity do you feel toward your contemporaries?

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VONNEGUT

My brother and sister writers? Friendly, certainly. It's hard for me to talk to some of them, since we seem to be in very different sorts of businesses. This was a mystery to me for a while, but then Saul Steinberg—

INTERVIEWER

The graphic artist?

VONNEGUT

Indeed. He said that in almost all arts, there were some people who responded strongly to art history, to triumphs and fiascoes and experiments of the past, and others who did not. I fell into the second group, and had to. I couldn't play games with my literary ancestors, since I had never studied them systematically. My education was as a chemist at Cornell and then an anthropologist at the University of Chicago. Christ—I was thirty-five before I went crazy about Blake, forty before I read *Madame Bovary*, forty-five before I'd even heard of Céline. Through dumb luck, I read *Look Homeward, Angel* exactly when I was supposed to.

INTERVIEWER

When?

VONNEGUT

At the age of eighteen.

INTERVIEWER

So you've always been a reader?

VONNEGUT

Yes. I grew up in a house crammed with books. But I never had to read a book for academic credit, never had to write a paper about it, never had to prove I'd understood it in a seminar. I am a hopelessly clumsy discusser of books. My experience is nil.

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K.V. in Moscow with Rita Rait, his Russian translator—photograph taken in Writers Union under photograph of Mayakovsky.

K.V. with manuscript of Breakfast of Champions*—manuscript pages assembled in a continuous strip.*

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K.V. with son Mark, Mark's wife, Pat, and their son Zachary.

Photographs ©Jill Krementz

K.V. running on beach with his dog Pumpkin.

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INTERVIEWER

Which member of your family had the most influence on you as a writer?

VONNEGUT

My mother, I guess. Edith Lieber Vonnegut. After our family lost almost all of its money in the Great Depression, my mother thought she might make a new fortune by writing for the slick magazines. She took short story courses at night. She studied magazines the way gamblers study racing forms.

INTERVIEWER

She'd been rich at one time?

VONNEGUT

My father, an architect of modest means, married one of the richest girls in town. It was a brewing fortune based on Lieber Lager Beer and then Gold Medal Beer. Lieber Lager became Gold Medal after winning a prize at some Paris exposition.

INTERVIEWER

It must have been a very good beer.

VONNEGUT

Long before my time. I never tasted any. It had a secret ingredient, I know. My grandfather and his brewmaster wouldn't let anybody watch while they put it in.

INTERVIEWER

Do you know what it was?

VONNEGUT

Coffee.

INTERVIEWER

So your mother studied short story writing—

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VONNEGUT

And my father painted pictures in a studio he'd set up on the top floor of the house. There wasn't much work for architects during the Great Depression—not much work for anybody. Strangely enough, though, Mother was right: Even mediocre magazine writers were making money hand over fist.

INTERVIEWER

So your mother took a very practical attitude toward writing.

VONNEGUT

Not to say crass. She was a highly intelligent, cultivated woman, by the way. She went to the same high school I did, and was one of the few people who got nothing but A-plusses while she was there. She went east to a finishing school after that, and then traveled all over Europe. She was fluent in German and French. I still have her high school report cards somewhere. "A-plus, A-plus, A-plus . . . " She was a good writer, it turned out, but she had no talent for the vulgarity the slick magazines required. Fortunately, I was loaded with vulgarity, so, when I grew up, I was able to make her dream come true. Writing for *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Cosmopolitan* and *Ladies' Home Journal* and so on was as easy as falling off a log for me. I only wish she'd lived to see it. I only wish she'd lived to see all her grandchildren. She has ten. She didn't even get to see the first one. I made another one of her dreams come true: I lived on Cape Cod for many years. She always wanted to live on Cape Cod. It's probably very common for sons to try to make their mothers' impossible dreams come true. I adopted my sister's sons after she died, and it's spooky to watch them try to make her impossible dreams come true.

INTERVIEWER

What were your sister's dreams like?

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VONNEGUT

She wanted to live like a member of *The Swiss Family Robinson*, with impossibly friendly animals in impossibly congenial isolation. Her oldest son, Jim, has been a goat farmer on a mountain top in Jamaica for the past eight years. No telephone. No electricity.

INTERVIEWER

The Indianapolis High School you and your mother attended—

VONNEGUT

And my father. Shortridge High.

INTERVIEWER

It had a daily paper, I believe.

VONNEGUT

Yes. *The Shortridge Daily Echo.* There was a print shop right in the school. Students wrote the paper. Students set the type. After school.

INTERVIEWER

You just laughed about something.

VONNEGUT

It was something dumb I remembered about high school. It doesn't have anything to do with writing.

INTERVIEWER

You care to share it with us anyway?

VONNEGUT

Oh—I just remembered something that happened in a high school course on civics, on how our government worked. The teacher asked each of us to stand up in turn and tell what we did after school. I was sitting in the back of the room,

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sitting next to a guy named J.T. Alburger. He later became an insurance man in Los Angeles. He died fairly recently. Anyway—he kept nudging me, urging me, daring me to tell the truth about what I did after school. He offered me five dollars to tell the truth. He wanted me to stand up and say, "I make model airplanes and jerk off."

INTERVIEWER

I see.

VONNEGUT

I also worked on *The Shortridge Daily Echo.*

INTERVIEWER

Was that fun?

VONNEGUT

Fun and easy. I've always found it easy to write. Also, I learned to write for peers rather than for teachers. Most beginning writers don't get to write for peers—to catch hell from peers.

INTERVIEWER

So every afternoon you would go to the *Echo* office—

VONNEGUT

Yeah. And one time, while I was writing, I happened to sniff my armpits absent-mindedly. Several people saw me do it, and thought it was funny—and ever after that I was given the name "Snarf." In the Annual for my graduating class, the Class of 1940, I'm listed as "Kurt Snarfield Vonnegut, Jr." Technically, I wasn't really a snarf. A snarf was a person who went around sniffing girls' bicycle saddles. I didn't do that. "Twerp" also had a very specific meaning, which few people know now. Through careless usage, "twerp" is a pretty formless insult now.

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INTERVIEWER

What is a twerp in the strictest sense, in the original sense?

VONNEGUT

It's a person who inserts a set of false teeth between the cheeks of his ass.

INTERVIEWER

I see.

VONNEGUT

I beg your pardon; between the cheeks of his or *her* ass. I'm always offending feminists that way.

INTERVIEWER

I don't quite understand why someone would do that with false teeth.

VONNEGUT

In order to bite the buttons off the back seats of taxicabs. That's the only reason twerps do it. It's all that turns them on.

INTERVIEWER

You went to Cornell University after Shortridge?

VONNEGUT

I imagine.

INTERVIEWER

You imagine?

VONNEGUT

I had a friend who was a heavy drinker. If somebody asked him if he'd been drunk the night before, he would always answer off-handedly, "Oh, I imagine." I've always liked that answer. It acknowledges life as a dream. Cornell was a boozy

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dream, partly because of booze itself, and partly because I was enrolled exclusively in courses I had no talent for. My father and brother agreed that I should study chemistry, since my brother had done so well with chemicals at M.I.T. He's eight years older than I am. Funnier, too. His most famous discovery is that silver iodide will sometimes make it rain or snow.

INTERVIEWER

Was your sister funny, too?

VONNEGUT

Oh, yes. There was an odd cruel streak to her sense of humor, though, which didn't fit in with the rest of her character somehow. She thought it was terribly funny whenever anybody fell down. One time she saw a woman come out of a streetcar horizontally, and she laughed for weeks after that.

INTERVIEWER

Horizontally?

VONNEGUT

Yes. This woman must have caught her heels somehow. Anyway, the streetcar door opened, and my sister happened to be watching from the sidewalk, and then she saw this woman come out horizontally—as straight as a board, face down, and about two feet off the ground.

INTERVIEWER

Slapstick?

VONNEGUT

Sure. We loved Laurel and Hardy. You know what one of the funniest things is that can happen in a film?

INTERVIEWER

No.

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VONNEGUT

To have somebody walk through what looks like a shallow little puddle, but which is actually six feet deep. I remember a movie where Cary Grant was loping across lawns at night. He came to a low hedge, which he cleared ever so gracefully, only there was a twenty-foot drop on the other side. But the thing my sister and I loved best was when somebody in a movie would tell everybody off, and then make a grand exit into the coat closet. He had to come out again, of course, all tangled in coathangers and scarves.

INTERVIEWER

Did you take a degree in chemistry at Cornell?

VONNEGUT

I was flunking everything by the middle of my junior year. I was delighted to join the Army and go to war. After the war, I went to the University of Chicago, where I was pleased to study anthropology, a science that was mostly poetry, that involved almost no math at all. I was married by then, and soon had one kid, who was Mark. He would later go crazy, of course, and write a fine book about it—*The Eden Express.* He has just fathered a kid himself, my first grandchild, a boy named Zachary. Mark is finishing his second year in Harvard Medical School, and will be about the only member of his class not to be in debt when he graduates—because of the book. That's a pretty decent recovery from a crackup, I'd say.

INTERVIEWER

Did the study of anthropology later color your writings?

VONNEGUT

It confirmed my atheism, which was the faith of my fathers anyway. Religions were exhibited and studied as the Rube Goldberg inventions I'd always thought they were. We weren't allowed to find one culture superior to any other. We caught hell if we mentioned races much. It was highly idealistic.

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INTERVIEWER

Almost a religion?

VONNEGUT

Exactly. And the only one for me. So far.

INTERVIEWER

What was your dissertation?

VONNEGUT

Cat's Cradle.

INTERVIEWER

But you wrote that years after you left Chicago, didn't you?

VONNEGUT

I left Chicago without writing a dissertation—and without a degree. All my ideas for dissertations had been rejected, and I was broke, so I took a job as a P.R. man for General Electric in Schenectady. Twenty years later, I got a letter from a new dean at Chicago, who had been looking through my dossier. Under the rules of the university, he said, a published work of high quality could be substituted for a dissertation, so I was entitled to an M.A. He had shown *Cat's Cradle* to the Anthropology Department, and they had said it was half-way decent anthropology, so they were mailing me my degree. I'm Class of 1972 or so.

INTERVIEWER

Congratulations.

VONNEGUT

It was nothing, really. A piece of cake.

INTERVIEWER

Some of the characters in *Cat's Cradle* were based on people you knew at G.E., isn't that so?

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VONNEGUT

Dr. Felix Hoenikker, the absent-minded scientist, was a caricature of Dr. Irving Langmuir, the star of the G.E. Research Laboratory. I knew him some. My brother worked with him. Langmuir was wonderfully absent-minded. He wondered out loud one time whether, when turtles pulled in their heads, their spines buckled or contracted. I put that in the book. One time he left a tip under his plate after his wife served him breakfast at home. I put that in. His most important contribution, though, was the idea for what I called "Ice-9," a form of frozen water that was stable at room temperature. He didn't tell it directly to me. It was a legend around the Laboratory—about the time H.G. Wells came to Schenectady. That was long before my time. I was just a little boy when it happened—listening to the radio, building model airplanes.

INTERVIEWER

Yes?

VONNEGUT

Anyway—Wells came to Schenectady, and Langmuir was told to be his host. Langmuir thought he might entertain Wells with an idea for a science-fiction story—about a form of ice that was stable at room temperature. Wells was uninterested, or at least never used the idea. And then Wells died, and then, finally, Langmuir died. I thought to myself: "Finders, keepers—the idea is mine." Langmuir, incidentally, was the first scientist in private industry to win a Nobel Prize.

INTERVIEWER

How do you feel about Bellow's winning the Nobel Prize for Literature?

VONNEGUT

It was the best possible way to honor our entire literature.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you find it easy to talk to him?

VONNEGUT

Yes. I've had about three opportunities. I was his host one time at the University of Iowa, where I was teaching and he was lecturing. It went very well. We had one thing in common, anyway—

INTERVIEWER

Which was—?

VONNEGUT

We were both products of the Anthropology Department of the University of Chicago. So far as I know, he never went on any anthropological expeditions, and neither did I. We invented pre-industrial peoples instead—I in *Cat's Cradle* and he in *Henderson the Rain King*.

INTERVIEWER

So he is a fellow scientist.

VONNEGUT

I'm no scientist at all. I'm glad, though, now that I was pressured into becoming a scientist by my father and my brother. I understand how scientific reasoning and playfulness work, even though I have no talent for joining in. I enjoy the company of scientists, am easily excited and entertained when they tell me what they're doing. I've spent a lot more time with scientists than with literary people, my brother's friends, mostly. I enjoy plumbers and carpenters and automobile mechanics, too. I didn't get to know any literary people until the last ten years, starting with two years of teaching at Iowa. There at Iowa, I was suddenly friends with Nelson Algren and José Donoso and Vance Bourjaily and Donald Justice and George Starbuck and Marvin Bell, and so on. I was amazed. Now, judging from the reviews my latest book, *Slapstick*, has received, people would like to bounce me out of the literary establishment—send me back where I came from.

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INTERVIEWER

There were some bad reviews?

VONNEGUT

Only in *The New York Times, Time, Newsweek, The New York Review of Books, The Village Voice,* and *Rolling Stone.* They loved me in Medicine Hat.

INTERVIEWER

To what do you attribute this rancor?

VONNEGUT

Slapstick may be a very bad book. I am perfectly willing to believe that. Everybody else writes lousy books, so why shouldn't I? What was unusual about the reviews was that they wanted people to admit now that I had never been any good. The reviewer for the Sunday *Times* actually asked critics who had praised me in the past to now admit in public how wrong they'd been. My publisher, Sam Lawrence, tried to comfort me by saying that authors were invariably attacked when they became fabulously well-to-do.

INTERVIEWER

You needed comforting?

VONNEGUT

I never felt worse in my life. I felt as though I were sleeping standing up on a boxcar in Germany again.

INTERVIEWER

That bad?

VONNEGUT

No. But bad enough. All of a sudden, critics wanted me squashed like a bug. And it wasn't just that I had money all of a sudden, either. The hidden complaint was that I was barbarous, that I wrote without having made a systematic

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study of great literature, that I was no gentleman, since I had done hack writing so cheerfully for vulgar magazines—that I had not paid my academic dues.

INTERVIEWER

You had not suffered?

VONNEGUT

I had suffered, all right—but as a badly-educated person in vulgar company and in a vulgar trade. It was dishonorable enough that I perverted art for money. I then topped that felony by becoming, as I say, fabulously well-to-do. Well, that's just too damn bad for me and for everybody. I'm completely in print, so we're all stuck with me and stuck with my books.

INTERVIEWER

Do you mean to fight back?

VONNEGUT

In a way. I'm on the New York State Council for the Arts now, and every so often some other member talks about sending notices to college English departments about some literary opportunity, and I say, "Send them to the chemistry departments, send them to the zoology departments, send them to the anthropology departments and the astronomy departments and physics departments, and all the medical and law schools. That's where the writers are most likely to be."

INTERVIEWER

You believe that?

VONNEGUT

I think it can be tremendously refreshing if a creator of literature has something on his mind other than the history of literature so far. Literature should not disappear up its own asshole, so to speak.

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INTERVIEWER

Let's talk about the women in your books.

VONNEGUT

There aren't any. No real women, no love.

INTERVIEWER

Is this worth expounding upon?

VONNEGUT

It's a mechanical problem. So much of what happens in storytelling is mechanical, has to do with the technical problems of how to make a story work. Cowboy stories and policeman stories end in shoot-outs, for example, because shoot-outs are the most reliable mechanisms for making such stories end. There is nothing like death to say what is always such an artificial thing to say: "The end." I try to keep deep love out of my stories because, once that particular subject comes up, it is almost impossible to talk about anything else. Readers don't want to hear about anything else. They go gaga about love. If a lover in a story wins his true love, that's the end of the tale, even if World War III is about to begin, and the sky is black with flying saucers.

INTERVIEWER

So you keep love out.

VONNEGUT

I have other things I want to talk about. Ralph Ellison did the same thing in *Invisible Man.* If the hero in that magnificent book had found somebody worth loving, somebody who was crazy about him, that would have been the end of the story. Céline did the same thing in *Journey to the End of Night:* He excluded the possibility of true and final love—so that the story could go on and on and on.

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INTERVIEWER

Not many writers talk about the mechanics of stories.

VONNEGUT

I am such a barbarous technocrat that I believe they can be tinkered with like Model T Fords.

INTERVIEWER

To what end?

VONNEGUT

To give the reader pleasure.

INTERVIEWER

Will you ever write a love story, do you think?

VONNEGUT

Maybe. I lead a loving life. I really do. Even when I'm leading that loving life, though, and it's going so well, I sometimes find myself thinking, "My goodness, couldn't we talk about something else for just a little while?" You know what's really funny?

INTERVIEWER

No.

VONNEGUT

My books are being thrown out of school libraries all over the country—because they're supposedly obscene. I've seen letters to small town newspapers that put *Slaughterhouse-Five* in the same class with *Deep Throat* and *Hustler* magazine. How could anybody masturbate to *Slaughterhouse-Five*?

INTERVIEWER

It takes all kinds.

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VONNEGUT

Well, that kind doesn't exist. It's my religion the censors hate. They find me disrespectful towards their idea of God Almighty. They think it's the proper business of government to protect the reputation of God. All I can say is, "Good luck to them, and good luck to the government, and good luck to God." You know what H.L. Mencken said one time about religious people? He said he'd been greatly misunderstood. He said he didn't hate them. He simply found them comical.

INTERVIEWER

When I asked you a while back which member of your family had influenced you most as a writer, you said your mother. I had expected you to say your sister, since you talked so much about her in *Slapstick*.

VONNEGUT

I said in *Slapstick* that she was the person I wrote for—that every successful creative person creates with an audience of one in mind. That's the secret of artistic unity. Anybody can achieve it, if he or she will make something with only one person in mind. I didn't realize that she was the person I wrote for until after she died.

INTERVIEWER

She loved literature?

VONNEGUT

She wrote wonderfully well. She didn't read much—but, then again, neither in later years did Henry David Thoreau. My father was the same way: he didn't read much, but he could write like a dream. Such letters my father and sister wrote! When I compare their prose with mine, I am ashamed.

INTERVIEWER

Did your sister try to write for money, too?

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VONNEGUT

No. She could have been a remarkable sculptor, too. I bawled her out one time for not doing more with the talents she had. She replied that having talent doesn't carry with it the obligation that something has to be done with it. This was startling news to me. I thought people were supposed to grab their talents and run as far and fast as they could.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think now?

VONNEGUT

Well—what my sister said now seems a peculiarly feminine sort of wisdom. I have two daughters who are as talented as she was, and both of them are damned if they are going to lose their poise and senses of humor by snatching up their talents and desperately running as far and as fast as they can. They saw me run as far and as fast as I could—and it must have looked like quite a crazy performance to them. And this is the worst possible metaphor, for what they actually saw was a man sitting still for decades.

INTERVIEWER

At a typewriter.

VONNEGUT

Yes, and smoking his fool head off.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever stopped smoking?

VONNEGUT

Twice. Once I did it cold turkey, and turned into Santa Claus. I became roly-poly. I was approaching 250 pounds. I stopped for almost a year, and then the University of Hawaii brought me to Oahu to speak. I was drinking out of a coconut on the roof of the Ili Kai one night,

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and all I had to do to complete the ring of my happiness was to smoke a cigarette. Which I did.

INTERVIEWER

The second time?

VONNEGUT

Very recently—last year. I paid Smoke Enders 150 dollars to help me quit, over a period of six weeks. It was exactly as they had promised—easy and instructive. I won my graduation certificate and recognition pin. The only trouble was that I had also gone insane. I was supremely happy and proud, but those around me found me unbearably opinionated and abrupt and boisterous. Also: I had stopped writing. I didn't even write letters any more. I had made a bad trade, evidently. So I started smoking again. As the National Association of Manufacturers used to say—

INTERVIEWER

I'm not sure I know what they used to say.

VONNEGUT

"There's no such thing as a free lunch."

INTERVIEWER

Do you really think creative writing can be taught?

VONNEGUT

About the same way golf can be taught. A pro can point out obvious flaws in your swing. I did that well, I think, at the University of Iowa for two years. Gail Godwin and John Irving and Jonathan Penner and Bruce Dobler and John Casey and Jane Casey were all students of mine out there. They've all published wonderful stuff since then. I taught creative writing badly at Harvard—because my marriage was breaking up, and because I was commuting every week to Cambridge from New York. I taught even worse at City

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College a couple of years ago. I had too many other projects going on at the same time. I don't have the will to teach any more. I only know the theory.

INTERVIEWER

Could you put the theory into a few words?

VONNEGUT

It was stated by Paul Engle—the founder of the Writers Workshop at Iowa. He told me that, if the Workshop ever got a building of its own, these words should be inscribed over the entrance: "Don't take it all so seriously."

INTERVIEWER

And how would that be helpful?

VONNEGUT

It would remind the students that they were learning to play practical jokes.

INTERVIEWER

Practical jokes?

VONNEGUT

If you make people laugh or cry about little black marks on sheets of white paper, what is that but a practical joke? All the great story lines are great practical jokes that people fall for over and over again.

INTERVIEWER

Can you give an example?

VONNEGUT

The Gothic novel. Dozens of the things are published every year, and they all sell. My friend Borden Deal recently wrote a Gothic novel for the fun of it, and I asked him what the plot was, and he said, "A young woman takes a job in an old house and gets the pants scared off her."

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INTERVIEWER

Some more examples?

VONNEGUT

The others aren't that much fun to describe: Somebody gets into trouble, and then gets out again; somebody loses something and gets it back; somebody is wronged and gets revenge; Cinderella; somebody hits the skids and just goes down, down, down; people fall in love with each other, and a lot of other people get in the way; a virtuous person is falsely accused of sin; a sinful person is believed to be virtuous; a person faces a challenge bravely, and succeeds or fails; a person lies, a person steals, a person kills, a person commits fornication.

INTERVIEWER

If you will pardon my saying so, these are very old-fashioned plots.

VONNEGUT

I guarantee you that no modern story scheme, even plotlessness, will give a reader genuine satisfaction, unless one of those old fashioned plots is smuggled in somewhere. I don't praise plots as accurate representations of life, but as ways to keep readers reading. When I used to teach creative writing, I would tell the students to make their characters want something right away—even if it's only a glass of water. Characters paralyzed by the meaningless of modern life still have to drink water from time to time. One of my students wrote a story about a nun who got a piece of dental floss stuck between her lower left molars, and who couldn't get it out all day long. I thought that was wonderful. The story dealt with issues a lot more important than dental floss, but what kept readers going was anxiety about when the dental floss would finally be removed. Nobody could read that story without fishing around in his mouth with a finger. Now, there's an admirable practical joke for you. When you exclude plot,

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when you exclude anyone's wanting anything, you exclude the reader, which is a mean-spirited thing to do. You can also exclude the reader by not telling him immediately where the story is taking place, and who the people are—

INTERVIEWER

And what they want.

VONNEGUT

Yes. And you can put him to sleep by never having characters confront each other. Students like to say that they stage no confrontations because people avoid confrontations in modern life. "Modern life is so lonely," they say. This is laziness. It's the writer's job to stage confrontations, so the characters will say surprising and revealing things, and educate and entertain us all. If a writer can't or won't do that, he should withdraw from the trade.

INTERVIEWER

Trade?

VONNEGUT

Trade. Carpenters build houses. Story tellers use a reader's leisure time in such a way that the reader will not feel that his time has been wasted. Mechanics fix automobiles.

INTERVIEWER

Surely talent is required?

VONNEGUT

In all those fields. I was a Saab dealer on Cape Cod for a while, and I enrolled in their mechanic's school, and they threw me out of their mechanic's school. No talent.

INTERVIEWER

How common is story-telling talent?

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VONNEGUT

In a creative writing class of twenty people anywhere in this country, six students will be startlingly talented. Two of those might actually publish something by and by.

INTERVIEWER

What distinguishes those two from the rest?

VONNEGUT

They will have something other than literature itself on their minds. They will probably be hustlers, too. I mean that they won't want to wait passively for somebody to discover them. They will insist on being read.

INTERVIEWER

You have been a public relations man and an advertising man—

VONNEGUT

Oh, I imagine.

INTERVIEWER

Was this painful? I mean—did you feel your talent was being wasted, being crippled?

VONNEGUT

No. That's romance—that work of that sort damages a writer's soul. At Iowa, Dick Yates and I used to give a lecture each year on the writer and the free enterprise system. The students hated it. We would talk about all the hack jobs writers could take in case they found themselves starving to death, or in case they wanted to accumulate enough capital to finance the writing of a book. Since publishers aren't putting money into first novels any more, and since the magazines have died, and since television isn't buying from young freelancers any more, and since the foundations give grants only to old poops like me, young writers are going to have to

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support themselves as shameless hacks. Otherwise, we are soon going to find ourselves without a contemporary literature. There is only one genuinely ghastly thing hack jobs do to writers, and that is to waste their precious time.

INTERVIEWER

No joke.

VONNEGUT

A tragedy. I just keep trying to think of ways, even horrible ways, for young writers to somehow hang on.

INTERVIEWER

Should young writers be subsidized?

VONNEGUT

Something's got to be done, now that free enterprise has made it impossible for them to support themselves through free enterprise. I was a sensational businessman in the beginning—for the simple reason that there was so much business to be done. When I was working for General Electric, I wrote a story, "Report on the Barnhouse Effect," the first story I ever wrote. I mailed it off to *Collier's*. Knox Burger was fiction editor there. Knox told me what was wrong with it and how to fix it. I did what he said, and he bought the story for seven-hundred and fifty dollars, six weeks' pay at G.E. I wrote another, and he paid me nine-hundred and fifty dollars, and suggested that it was perhaps time for me to quit G.E. Which I did. I moved to Provincetown. Eventually, my price for a short story got up to twenty-nine hundred dollars a crack. Think of that. And Knox got me a couple of agents who were as shrewd about story telling as he was—Kenneth Littauer, who had been his predecessor at *Collier's*, and Max Wilkinson, who had been a story editor for MGM. And let it be put on the record here that Knox Burger, who is about my age, discovered and encouraged more good young writers than any other editor of his time. I don't think that's ever

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been written down anywhere. It's a fact known only to writers, and one that could easily vanish, if it isn't somewhere written down.

INTERVIEWER

Where is Knox Burger now?

VONNEGUT

He's a literary agent. He represents my son Mark, in fact.

INTERVIEWER

And Littauer and Wilkinson?

VONNEGUT

Littauer died ten years ago or so. He was a colonel in the Lafayette Escadrille, by the way, at the age of twenty-three—and the first man to straff a trench. He was my mentor. Max Wilkinson has retired to Florida. It always embarrassed him to be an agent. If some stranger asked him what he did for a living, he always said he was a cotton planter.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have a new mentor now?

VONNEGUT

No. I guess I'm too old to find one. Whatever I write now is set in type without comment by my publisher, who is younger than I am, by editors, by anyone. I don't have my sister to write for any more. Suddenly, there are all these unfilled jobs in my life.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel as though you're up there without a net under you?

VONNEGUT

And without a balancing pole, either. It gives me the heebie-jeebies sometimes.

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INTERVIEWER

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

VONNEGUT

You know the panic bars they have on the main doors of schools and theaters? If you get slammed into the door, the door will fly open?

INTERVIEWER

Yes.

VONNEGUT

The brand name on most of them is "Vonduprin." The "Von" is for Vonnegut. A relative of mine was caught in the Iroquois Theater Fire in Chicago a long time ago, and he invented the panic bar along with two other guys. "Prin" was Prinz. I forget who "Du" was.

INTERVIEWER

O.K.

VONNEGUT

And I want to say, too, that humorists are very commonly the youngest children in their families. When I was the littlest kid at our supper table, there was only one way I could get anybody's attention, and that was to be funny. I had to specialize. I used to listen to radio comedians very intently, so I could learn how to make jokes. And that's what my books are, now that I'm a grownup—mosaics of jokes.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any favorite jokes?

VONNEGUT

My sister and I used to argue about what the funniest joke in the world was—next to a guy storming into a coat closet, of course. When the two of us worked together, incidentally, we could be almost as funny as Laurel and Hardy. That's basically what *Slapstick* was about.

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INTERVIEWER

Did you finally agree on the world's champion joke?

VONNEGUT

We finally settled on two. It's sort of hard to tell either one just flat-footed like this.

INTERVIEWER

Do it anyway.

VONNEGUT

Well—you won't laugh. Nobody ever laughs. But one is an old "Two Black Crows" joke. The "Two Black Crows" were white guys in blackface—named Moran and Mack. They made phonograph records of their routines, two supposedly black guys talking lazily to each other. Anyway, one of them says, "Last night I dreamed I was eating flannel cakes." The other one says, "Is that so?" And the first one says, "And when I woke up, the blanket was gone."

INTERVIEWER

Um.

VONNEGUT

I told you you wouldn't laugh. The other champion joke requires your cooperation. I will ask you a question, and you will have to say "No".

INTERVIEWER

O.K.

VONNEGUT

Do you know why cream is so much more expensive than milk?

INTERVIEWER

No.

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VONNEGUT

Because the cows hate to squat on those little bottles. See, you didn't laugh again, but I give you my sacred word of honor that those are splendid jokes. Exquisite craftsmanship.

INTERVIEWER

You seem to prefer Laurel and Hardy over Chaplin. Is that so?

VONNEGUT

I'm crazy about Chaplin, but there's too much distance between him and his audience. He is too obviously a genius. In his own way, he's as brilliant as Picasso, and this is intimidating to me.

INTERVIEWER

Will you ever write another short story?

VONNEGUT

Maybe. I wrote what I thought would be my last one about eight years ago. Harlan Ellison asked me to contribute to a collection he was making. The story's called "The Big Space Fuck." I think I am the first writer to use "fuck" in a title. It was about firing a space ship with a warhead full of jizzum at Andromeda. Which reminds me of my good Indianapolis friend, about the only Indianapolis friend I've got left—William Failey. When we got into the Second World War, and everybody was supposed to give blood, he wondered if he couldn't give a pint of jizzum instead.

INTERVIEWER

If your parents hadn't lost all their money, what would you be doing now?

VONNEGUT

I'd be an Indianapolis architect—like my father and grandfather. And very happy, too. I still wish that had happened.

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One thing, anyway: One of the best young architects out there lives in a house my father built for our family the year I was born—1922. My initials, and my sisters initials, and my brother's initials are all written in leaded glass in the three little windows by the front door.

INTERVIEWER

So you have good old days you hanker for.

VONNEGUT

Yes. Whenever I go to Indianapolis, the same question asks itself over and over again in my head: "Where's my bed, where's my bed?" And if my father's and grandfather's ghosts haunt that town, they must be wondering where all their buildings have gone to. The center of the city, where most of their buildings were, has been turned into parking-lots. They must be wondering where all their relatives went, too. They grew up in a huge extended family which is no more. I got the slightest taste of that—the big family thing. And when I went to the University of Chicago, and I heard the head of the Department of Anthropology, Robert Redfield, lecture on the folk society, which was essentially a stable, isolated extended family, he did not have to tell me how nice that could be.

INTERVIEWER

Anything else?

VONNEGUT

Well—I just discovered a prayer for writers. I'd heard of prayers for sailors and kings and soldiers and so on—but never of a prayer for writers. Could I put that in here?

INTERVIEWER

Certainly.

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VONNEGUT

It was written by Samuel Johnson on April 3, 1753, the day on which he signed a contract which required him to write the first complete dictionary of the English language. He was praying for himself. Perhaps April third should be celebrated as "Writers' Day." Anyway, this is the prayer: "O God, who hast hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labor, and in the whole task of my present state; that when I shall render up, at the last day, an account of the talent committed to me, I may receive pardon, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen."

INTERVIEWER

That seems to be a wish to carry his talent as far and as fast as he can.

VONNEGUT

Yes. He was a notorious hack.

INTERVIEWER

And you consider yourself a hack?

VONNEGUT

Of a sort.

INTERVIEWER

What sort?

VONNEGUT

A child of the Great Depression. And perhaps we should say something at this point how this interview itself was done—unless candor would somehow spoil everything.

INTERVIEWER

Let the chips fall where they may.

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VONNEGUT

Four different interviews with me were submitted to *The Paris Review*. These were patched together to form a single interview, which was shown to me. This scheme worked only fairly well, so I called in yet another interviewer to make it all of a piece. I was that person. With utmost tenderness, I interviewed myself.

INTERVIEWER

I see. Our last question. If you were Commisar of Publishing in the United States, what would you do to alleviate the present deplorable situation?

VONNEGUT

There is no shortage of wonderful writers. What we lack is a dependable mass of readers.

INTERVIEWER

So—?

VONNEGUT

I propose that every person out of work be required to submit a book report before he or she gets his or her welfare check.

INTERVIEWER

Thank you.

INTERVIEWER

Thank *you*.

[DAVID HAYMAN
DAVID MICHAELIS
GEORGE PLIMPTON
RICHARD L. RHODES]

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In the Shadow of Mountains

Barbara Milton

When Emily Jessup said goodbye to her daughter in Oslo, she did not expect to see her again for at least five days. Mimi was going mountain climbing with friends and was to meet her mother at the end of the week on the tip of a fjord in Fläm. Emily looked forward to the time apart.

The first day she met a traveling toothbrush salesman while looking at the mosaics in the City Hall. He told her of the recent rapes and increasing drug use in Norway and recommended caution.

She spent the afternoon in Vigeland Park where corridors of large, tubular statues embraced each other in various forms of family love and comradery. The naked, granular bodies were not of themselves sensual, but became so, for Emily, in their relation to other bodies. There were old women embracing old men and women wrapped up in women; children clung to men and men to each other. When Emily circled the fountain at the end of the long boulevard, she felt a wave of tenderness for her own family. As she walked back

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down the corridor in the drizzle and the mist, and looked at the statues on the other side, the men and women and children pressed between them, she had another, more sensual feeling.

That first night she pulled a puffy blue eiderdown over her head and curled up like a baby underneath it.

On the morning of the second day, she sketched from a window and wrote exalted postcards to her friends back home. By nightfall however, she grew restless and wanted someone to talk to and wished the rain would stop.

Now it is the third day and it rains still. Emily boards the train for Fläm. She chooses a seat on the left side of the car just as the guidebook suggests, and looks out the window and waits for communion with Nature. When the train stops alongside a glacier, Emily leaves the car to stand on the platform. She looks at the bald mound of ice, but is more aware of the cloud of her own breath.

As the train approaches Myrdal, the sun comes out. At Myrdal there is a smaller train that runs past waterfalls, down to the valley of Fläm.

During the descent, sun shines through slats of wooden tunnels into the cream-colored car. The train stops halfway down and a loudspeaker invites everyone to step out and take pictures of the waterfall which is short and fat and powerful. Emily spends most of the five minutes watching a Japanese boy take pictures with a Super 8.

Back on the train, she thinks only of her husband. He is in London making a film about a Japanese girl with whom he is in love. Before her holiday, when Emily confronted him, he said only, "Can I help it if she's in love with me?"

From the station she follows two women to a pension where they are given the last double room. Emily is offered a bed in the dormitory. "If no one else comes," says the landlady, "You can have it all to yourself."

Emily throws her things on a cot and goes outside to catch the late afternoon sun. The pension is at the center of the tip

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of the fjord. On either side, mountains rise like knees. To the right is the village which consists of one store, a large, white-frame hotel, and a railroad station. The rapids from the waterfall run parallel to the tracks. The water is clear and cold over the yellow stones on the bottom. Raspberry bushes filled with berries form a fringe on the western bank.

To the left of the pension is a small hotel and a gravel road that runs along the cliffs of the fjord to the next village. Emily walks along the road, then climbs the moss-covered boulders at the foot of the eastern mountain. She finds a patch of sunlight and sits down in it. Her fingers knead the clumps of moss as they might the neck of her English sheep dog. She has never been in such a place, so clean, so soft, alone.

Back on the road, she passes the Japanese boy. His name is Yukio and he is traveling around the world. "I travel alone," he explains, "That way I'm independent." He nods his head in emphasis. His hair hangs down like an early Beatle.

Almost unconsciously, Emily leads him up the mossy mountainside and helps him unload his pack. He tucks it behind a rock, then sits down next to her and talks about the Second World War. Sex and the Second World War are his favorite subjects and he wants to know how Emily, a Western woman, feels about these things. Because he is so eager and so nubile and so ready to be taught, Emily suddenly feels awkward and much older. Remembering the raspberry bushes at the bottom of the hill, she slides down the rocks to pick them. He follows her and after several minutes holds out a sweaty palm in which four pale berries lay stuck to their leafy stems.

She does not intend to be seductive when she leads him to a jetty of land still warmed by the sun over the banks of the fjord. But she cannot help but point out how pleasant it would be to spend the night in a small, wooden shed that lies bleached and clean-smelling three yards from where they sit.

She wants to speak whatever occurs to her; to start all over and continue in a new order of feeling and possibilities. She wants to push everything she felt on the train and before the

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train, all the pain of being just a wife, just a mother, and even just a person alone, into the background. And yet she feels funny and artificial. This woman acting like a girl, so sensual and light-hearted; this woman is not her at all.

He sits cross-legged, closes his eyes, and takes a deep breath. "Listen to the waterfall," he says. "Only that."

On the road again Yukio walks with his hands behind his back and squints his eyes and draws his lips together. He looks up at the clouds, over at the trees, and down at the water below.

"In Japan, you see many men walking just like this. Walking and thinking. No talking. Quietly, quietly. Up and down the road."

"Don't they ever watch television?" She wants to shatter all this seriousness.

Yukio smiles. "Oh yes, and movies too. Did you see 'Love Story'? I loved that movie. Very popular in Japan."

"Yukio?"

"Yes?"

"Yukio Mishima?"

"Ah, you know him?"

"Is that whom you're named after? What does Yukio mean?"

"Nothing really. But my last name, it means 'Shadow of the Mountain.' "

They stop for his pack. Emily helps him put it on his back. She is glad that he is taking the midnight train to Oslo.

"Are there any more rooms at your pension?" he asks her.

"I was given the last one."

"Is there only one bed in your room?"

"No."

"Maybe I could sleep in another one?"

Emily grows nervous and silent again. But as they near the pension, she sees her daughter Mimi descending the staircase. She hurries to embrace her.

"Mimi! How did you get here? Yukio. This is my daughter. Mimi, this is perfect!"

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Mimi had quickly grown tired of mountain climbing. Her legs hurt. The rain had soaked her pack all the way through. She had arrived on a ferryboat one hour earlier. The landlady had put her in the same room with Emily.

"Isn't it a beautiful room, Mother?" And to Yukio, "Are you sleeping there too?"

It is late when the three of them finish dinner but Emily and Yukio go for a boat ride. Yukio says that he knows how to row, but he doesn't. His oars just skim the surface and the strokes are cut short by his upright positioning.

Emily takes the oars from him. She leans forward and leans back drawing the handles around elliptical curves. Then she gives up one oar and makes room for him to sit down. At first, she rows one stroke for his every two.

Yukio wants to take the boat all the way to the northern end where there is a passageway to a larger fjord, but Emily stops rowing when they reach the western cliffs. She wants to listen for animals. She has heard there are moose in Norway and the possibility of seeing one up close frightens her in a way she enjoys.

"Put your oar away," she says. "Shhhhh."

Yukio does not understand her meaning. He puts one arm stiffly around her shoulder. She turns away from him and leans against the side of the boat. Cupping the side of her face with his hand, pressing her eyes with his fingers, he draws her head around and kisses her. She turns back to the mountain.

"I want to listen," she insists.

He moves over closer to her. The boat sinks to one side.

On the way back he is a much better oarsman. She can't keep up with him. She hands him her oar and goes to sit in the back of the boat. He stops rowing altogether.

"In England," he asks, "is sex normal?"

"Yes."

"In Europe too. Boy, girl, meet. They sex. In Japan, not normal. Only marriage normal."

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"Do you have a girlfriend in Japan?"

"Oh, no. In high school I might have had one, but I was much too busy. President of the Student Council. It's true."

"Really?"

"Yes, and Judo too."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-two. How old did you think I was?"

"I don't know . . . I'm thirty-six."

"How old were you when you first sexed?"

"Eighteen."

"Noooo. It's true?"

"Um hum."

"Ahhhhh. You have much knowledge. I can tell."

Yukio is a virgin. It is two o'clock in the morning and he cannot get to sleep. In a cot across the room, Emily listens to her daughter's heavy breathing. And she hears the plea in Yukio's tosses and turns and feels at once responsible and sympathetic.

She is tired of facing the wall and pretending to sleep. She wants to toss, too, and turn and look out the window at the moon—the fat Norwegian moon pouring moonlight into the middle of the fjord.

She throws off the covers and goes to the bathroom where she brushes her teeth violently. When she returns, she answers Yukio's pleading look with an angry, "Go to sleep."

"What?"

"Go to sleep."

Now she lies on her back. He slides down from his top bunk, pajama bottoms twisted around his waist, and comes to her and kneels at the side of her bed.

"You understand? I cannot get to sleep with you lying here. You understand?"

She takes his head in her hands. She speaks clearly but very quietly for she does not want to awaken Mimi.

"Why don't you go for a walk?"

"What?"

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"Walk!" Her enunciation drowns in the whisper. He leans over her. His bare brown chest, smooth as an eel, crushes against her. His heart is pounding. He picks up his knees and places them on the bed. He kisses her face. His tongue jabs at her mouth. His thumb presses her eyelid. He has never learned how to hold a woman, but he is on fire and she is warmed by him.

Mimi rolls over and rolls back again.

"Do you want to make love?" Emily whispers.

"Do you want?"

"Let's go outside."

She pushes him gently away and gets out of bed. Quickly she dresses. He takes off his pajamas. He is wearing jockey underpants which she does not like, but they are loose and soft and she is moved by them. He turns and sees her staring. Should he take her? He doesn't know. He cannot understand her signals.

"Get dressed," she tells him. "Let's go outside."

Outside it is misty and gray. They follow the road out of Fläm and climb the mossy rocks until they find a level spot. Emily spreads the quilt that she has brought and lies down on top of it. She undresses and waits for him to undress, but he hesitates. She begins to help him, but he is shy. She insists and takes his penis in her mouth and touches him. In a matter of seconds, he comes.

He is elated. She is cold. It is damp and there are mosquitos. She would like to stay and hold him in her arms, hold him until he falls asleep. But she is uncomfortable.

On the road she is gentle and cuddles up to him for warmth. Although she feels no passion, she knows that what she does now is important for him and it is important to her that he remember her well. She kisses his shoulder.

"Do you know how I feel?" he asks breathlessly. "Being here, now, at this moment? Ahhh. Look! The mountain top is filled with sun. As we walk, the sun rises higher and higher. More and more of the mountain lights up. Listen! The waterfall. Always the waterfall. Rushing, rushing."

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Wrapped in the quilt and the first light of morning, he strides proudly. Prince of the Dawn.

It is morning. Emily wakes and watches Mimi as she zips through her cases of lotions and creams. With her toes on the window sill, she spreads white lotion over one leg. Her body is beautiful, much fuller than her mother's. She tosses her black curly hair over her head and brushes and brushes.

Emily envies her daughter her completeness. Mimi has the sort of independence that comes from knowing exactly what and whom she can depend on. In the four pockets of her knapsack, she carries every pill, vitamin or ointment that a fifteen-year-old girl can possibly need while travelling in a foreign country. She also tucks away packets of tourist information and keeps notes in her notebook about places yet to see. Though she studies her city, country and Eurail maps carefully, she often asks directions along the way to each destination. This is the way she communicates with people and because she is so pretty and appealing, people enjoy giving her assistance. Emily has difficulty asking anybody for anything. The world does not absorb her as it does Mimi.

She turns to Yukio who lies on his back with his mouth open. Asleep at last.

It is time for breakfast.

There are other people in the dining room: a family; a husband and wife. Emily and Mimi quietly discuss the brown goat cheese and the warmth of the breakfast rolls. Both ask for coffee, then listen as the cups of other guests are placed gently in their saucers. For a while, the only sound in the little dining room is the clink of silverware on plates. Emily wonders how much Mimi heard.

Yukio comes into the room and trips over the small step behind the french doors. Everyone who has entered has tripped, but Yukio does not know this and looks down and to the side. He is wearing a purple football jersey. The table shakes as he pulls out his chair.

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"I'm sorry," he says.

Before filling his glass from the pitcher of milk, he fills both of theirs. He offers them the cheese, the bread, the last piece of omelet. Then he eats whatever is left over for he is very hungry. Mimi asks him about breakfast in Japan. He looks up and smiles and tells them about the fish, the rice, the vegetables. He stops often to see if they understand. In Japan, it is considered rude to over-explain.

They talk about food in different countries and he tells them about the train ride through Siberia.

"Outside it was very, very cold. Inside it was cold too. When the train stopped, there was a man selling hot potatoes. I went out to buy one. It was so cold! I took a potato in my hand. Ahhh! Hot! I could not hold it! Inside the train I ate the hot potato. Delicious. It went so quickly. The next time the train stopped, I bought two potatoes."

Outside the sky is blue, the sun is warm. Mimi is going to rent a bicycle.

"We'll come with you," says Emily.

"No, I'd rather go alone."

Emily and Yukio linger over coffee and tea, giving Mimi time to make her getaway. Then they, too, rent bicycles and ride along the fjord. They stop to buy food and Yukio insists on paying. They ride to the northern end where ferries pass along their way to Gutwangen.

They park their bikes behind a shed and climb a steep and sunny slope. Yukio wants to make love and they do. For Emily it is nice, but brief. Yukio wants to do it again.

"Not now," she says. "I want to walk."

"For you, it's nice?"

"Very nice."

"Okay, I stay here and sleep."

Down by the water, Emily sits on a pile of rocks. A ferry goes by. She decides to take one herself, perhaps this afternoon. When she looks back up the hill, Yukio is looking down at her. "Ahhh," he says as she walks up to him, "You look so nice down there."

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She sits down next to him and kisses his warm, brown cheek. He points to his zipper.

"You know, usually I am very little but when I sex I grow three times. I know. I measured it. Most people only grow two times, but me, I grow three. Uh huh. It's true."

She smiles at him. "You're very good."

He turns to face her and brings his eyebrows down. "In England, do they onanate?"

"Do they what?"

"Onanate."

"What's that?"

"Sex yourself."

"Sure they do."

"Girls too?"

"Of course."

"Ahhhh. Very different in Japan. Boys, yes. Girls, no."

"How do you know?"

"I have a sister. I know. I know."

As they go down the hill, Emily notices a stain perfectly centered on the back seam of the seat of his pants. She is embarrassed. They make an amusing enough pair as it is. Alone, she might pass without attracting too much attention. She is plain and fair and English. But he is Japanese. The children stare at him. When he smiles at them and says "hello," they don't always smile back.

She is afraid to tell him about the stain. He wouldn't be able to look her in the eye again. He has already told her that in Japan, boys and girls don't look each other in the eye.

On the bikes, riding back to Fläm, she feels acutely sensitive, even irritable. She wishes he would go away. She would like to put the necessary distance between them, to detach herself.

"When we get back, I'll draw your picture," she says.

"Okay. I'll draw yours too."

But he cannot draw.

"I'll write a poem," he says. "In high school, two of my

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poems were in the newspaper. It's true."

"Really?" Emily combs his hair back from his forehead with her fingers.

"Yes," he says softly.

"You have such a beautiful face. Why don't you wear your hair back?"

"In Japan my face is very unusual. It is the face of a Samurai. Maybe my ancestors were Samurai. I don't know. Now, everyone in Japan is the same. No lords, no Samurai." He brushes his hair forward again. "For now, I wear it this way."

Emily begins to draw and Yukio looks off into space. Every few minutes he nods his head and writes something down. Mimi comes in exhausted from the day's biking. She turns away from them and takes off her shirt, puts on a short blue robe, and takes off her jeans. Yukio looks steadily aside but places one hand over the crossing of his thighs. As Mimi collapses onto her top bunk she asks him, "Yukio, do you give massages?"

"Yes. I give them to my mother very often. I am very good. You want a massage?"

"Oh, would you?"

"Let him finish his poem first," says Emily.

"I am finished. Shall I read it to you?" He reads the poem in Japanese. He is breathless. Emily feels the meaning of every sound.

"What does it mean?" asks Mimi.

"Ahh, in Japanese it is the music that is important. You can't translate the music." He looks at Emily. "It is a love poem," he says.

Yukio approaches Mimi's bed as reverently as he might prepare for one of the martial arts. Mimi turns her head to him and shuts her eyes and purrs. He warms his hands by rubbing them together, then begins. His hands click as he kneads the flesh on her thighs. She arches her back in pain and cries out.

"Harder, harder," he says. "It is better that way."

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"You're hurting me!" she screams, then laughs. "Don't stop."

Emily watches the lacey edge of Mimi's robe ride up above her panties. Yukio is working on the calves now. Mimi has relaxed somewhat. Her head lies on her arms.

A tremendous rush of feeling goes through Emily.

Outside the waves lap against the sea wall. The four o'clock ferry is just pulling up to the dock.

"I'm going to take a ride through the fjords," Emily says and rises from her cot.

Yukio turns from Mimi's legs.

"I'll go with you," he says.

"No, I think I'll go alone."

Outside Emily stoops to tie her shoe. Her heart is racing, her mind is humming. She wants to slip back to the window and look in. Instead, she walks quickly down the driveway of the pension. She turns back once to see Yukio's face pressed up against the screen.

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Saltimbanques

1

Our road's no wider than yours. We often fall from the height. We're broken too, but our lack of attention doesn't force us to climb the rope again. Your slightest mistake can kill you. Our thousand mistakes amuse death, that spectator with the best seat in our circus of pain.

2

Let's be like them: let's never fall without dying. Such a crowd around our plunge. But a child, standing a bit apart, looks at the empty rope with the night behind, intact.

3

The rope was so high, all of that happened above the spotlights. Later, it was back among us again in its too pink tights. Up there it was another rose demonstrating the absurdity of its pure moving danger to the immense night.

4

Such perfection. If it were in your soul, what saints you'd make. It is in your soul, but you feel it only by accident, in those rare moments of an awkward move that no one sees.

Small Notebook

1

While drinking from this cup perhaps inscribed with signs of blessing and happiness in an unknown tongue, I hold it in my hand full of its own lines I can never explain. Do these two scripts agree? And since they're alone and secluded inside the dome of my glance, will they speak in their own way

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and be reconciled, these two ancient texts a drinker's gesture brings together.

2

How calm the house is; but up there in the white chapel, where does that greater silence come from? From all those who, for more than a century, came in simply not to be outdoors and, kneeling down, have frightened themselves with their own noise? From the money losing its voice as it falls in the collection box that will have only a cricket's little song in it when it's emptied? Or from this sweet absence of Saint Anne, the place's patron, who doesn't dare come closer, thus refusing to spoil that pure distance a calling-out implies?

3

"Farfalletina"

She arrives near the lamp all excited, and her dizziness gives her one last reprieve before she's burnt. She's fallen on the green tablecloth, and on that advantageous background she stretches her luxurious, inconceivable splendor a moment. She looks like a miniature woman who's collapsed on her way to the theatre. She'll never get there. Besides, where is there Theatre for such a fragile audience? We notice tiny gold threads in her wings moving like a double fan in front of no one's face; between them this thin body, a toy tumbler in which the emerald balls of two eyes fell. My dear, God exhausted himself in you. He throws you into the fire to regain his strength a little. Like a child breaking his bank.

Cemetery

Is there an after-taste of life in these graves? And in the flowers' mouths do bees find the hint of a word refusing speech? O flowers, prisoners of our instincts toward happiness, do you return to us with our dead in your veins? Flowers,

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how can you escape our grip? How can you not be *our* flowers? Does the rose really use all its petals to fly away from us? Does it want to be only a rose, nothing but a rose? No one's sleep beneath so many eyelids?

Translated from the French by A. Poulin, Jr.

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Three Japanese Woman Poets

Lady Ise

Shall I come to see
plum blossoms in every stream
and wet my sleeves
in unpluckable water
as I do now?

As the first spring mists appear
the wild geese leave.
Are they accustomed to live
in a flowerless land?

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Princess Nukada

Longing for you,
loving you,
waiting for you,
the bamboo blinds were swayed
only by the autumn wind.

Hatsui Shizue

Silently
time passes.
The only life I have
submits to its power.

Translated from the Japanese by Kenneth Rexroth

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Gisèle Prassinos

A Nice Family

We are a nice family.

My sister Brindille, the first-born, used to be married. She had an hourglass which indicated the time when the water of the ocean would reach a secret point on the hill. Every year, at that time, her husband, mounted on a wave, would be making his way home. He was a Black Man with long hair, full of sea plants, with an enormous body, incrusted with fishing nets and whole anchors,—he lived on immersed barges.

Before he embraced us, he made his shining skin quiver and a big fat laugh shook his shoulders. Then we saw his stomach completely swell up, while a stream of small dead fish escaped hissing from his mouth and came down into the apron of our triumphant mother.

Then there were the big hugs of reunion, the necessary rest after that long year of labor, and in the evening when the tide fled in a parallel way with the rise of the moon we accompanied the empty traveller all the way into the waves where he disappeared while smiling at us.

From that moment my sister Brindille lived only for his next visit, incapable of doing anything to help in the house and did not sleep until the ocean touched the foot of the hill, at which moment she knew that he would soon come back.

Our mother dried the fish by cooking them plain in a red hot frying pan, then burying them during winter in the snow, until that season went away.

My brother Moco fought in the war. His big stomach was

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riddled with small double pockets of skin, and when pressing on them with a finger, we could touch something hard which was the bullet of an exploded shell.

He loved to make us believe that he was dead. Sometimes when I came into his room in the morning to give him some mulberry leaves which he used to nibble at while waking up, I would cry out in grief upon seeing him stiff on his bed, his stomach kept open by dozens of small daggers driven in to the hilt. But I was soon calmed when I understood that the hollows of his scars served him as second wounds in order to frighten us. He then got up while laughing . . . and shook himself in a special way so that the small blades planted themselves in the wall in alignment.

He died playing; one of the small daggers having pierced his heart.

My brother Abel came from far away to see him for the last time. He is so handsome and elegant that we have asked him to stay close to us forever. My mother attracted him by showing him the small dry fishes which started to show through the snow and he said: "yes."

My brother Abel has a very small and tight stomach, but it is very nice. He has not fought in the war but in the revolution and he was not wounded. To reward him the king of the foreign country gave him an admirable gift. It was a small dial clock which they slipped under his skin, which was rendered transparent at that spot, and he is happy when he comes home at night to answer immediately if we ask him: "Abel, what time is it?" He is very rich and never works. He is very much in love with the husband of my sister Brindille and goes to meet him sometimes at the bottom of the ocean.

Last year the Negro came, but instead of small fishes he laughingly deposited into my mother's apron the pretty body

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of our brother Abel. "The foreign country deserved him better," said my mother, and, without a word, we all followed him to the wood-shed where our brother Moco is already buried.

"I no longer have a brother," I said crying, and our mother suddenly remembered that a very small brother still existed in Norway and that he could come to fill the painful void. We wrote to him at once. He made haste and we are happy to confirm that instead of the blond child we had expected it is a big gentleman, strong and intelligent, who wants to squeeze us in his arms. Our mother, my sister Brindille and I paint his beard and moustaches so that he shall look even more handsome and we sit him down in an easy-chair, close to the boiling pot. It is our brother Genty, he is young, his body is firm and supple, but his navel is much too large, hollowed and lugubrious.

Our brother Genty died yesterday. The Negro who came carried him away in his enormous arms to throw him in the water, because there is no longer any room in the wood-shed. My sister Brindille followed him in the end; in future she wants to live close to him in the waves. They will not come back, our mother will have no more fish and we remain alone with two dead men.

Translated from the French by Ellen Nations

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Four and Ten Subjects for a Painting

to Raymond Roussel

1. Three men. Two of them seated. The third, standing with his back turned to the room's only window, permits his beautiful eyes to stray across an infinite space. His right arm is extended, as if he were saying something, as if there were something he wanted to say.

2. Three men. Two of them standing, the third is seated in the middle of the elegantly furnished interior on an ancient marble capital in the Doric mode, elbows resting on knees, his face in his hands. The other two have approached one another and confer between themselves, either by means of signs or in very low tones.

3. Three men. Two of them are making frantic gestures, as if in the grip of madness. The third approaches the window, and, leaning forward, calmly tries to make out something in the street, which is beyond the viewer's range of vision.

4. Three men, seated.

5. Three men, seated. One of them wears a beard and has extraordinarily beautiful eyes.

6. Three men. Two of them exchange greetings while standing, in the attitude of "The Two Friends." The third is in uniform.

7. Three women, of a great and rare beauty, with something exalted and remarkably refined in their bearing, dressed in gowns of some heavy, brightly-colored material. Two of them are sitting on taborets trimmed in gold, resting their graceful forearms on marble capitals of some archaic design. The third, who is standing, wears a woven gown dyed a bright red hue, with a large bow of costly silk about her waist in back. Her name is Maria.

8. Three men inside on horseback. Each sports a dark riding habit, spurs, a whip, a helmet.

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9. Three men studying a spherical globe of the world in silence. Beside them is a table, and on this, a hammer, a sickle, an open book, a compass, and other emblems of freemasonry. The scene is inscribed with the word "tourists."

10. A garden, and in the center a country villa, and a fountain flanked by cypresses, and a sundial. And Saint Nicholas, dressed in a chasuble and standing for the Mass, holds on his left the Gospels and on his right a map which reads: "wingéd wanderer in the gardens of the Church . . . " Behind him stands a throng of soldiers, and in their midst is Saint George, a beardless youth, and Barbaros, who is wearing chains. In the lefthand corner of the picture, a ship founders; in the right a ship is setting sail.

11. Three men, two of whom are seated, and gazing at the viewer full face. The third, standing, is lost in the shadows at the back of the room.

12. Three men. Two of them standing. The third is seated. They have a preoccupied air about them.

13. Three men. Two of them are seated, gazing toward the third, who is standing up, reading.

14. Three men. Two of them seated, the third is standing.

The Final Appearance of Judas Iscariot

The small American town, lost amid the limitless reaches of the Ayrton plains, found itself bereft of the profound tranquility to which it had been accustomed since the days, rather recent after all—say around 1867—of its founding. It seems that regularly, at about midnight, a strange and mysterious man had been gaining entrance to even the most securely bolted homes, was disturbing the repose of the sleepers, ruffling their sound consciences, infusing their hearts with a fatal dose of bitterness and, with a tin penny-whistle—

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which incidently he played to perfection—was awakening in one and all a poignant and despotic, if undefinable, sense of nostalgia. Needless to say, next morning no one could remember even a snatch of their traumatic nightmare. Nevertheless, for the remainder of the day it seemed as if a tremendous burden must weigh upon their spirits. It was a certain night-walker who ultimately solved this most vexing riddle. One night, when his uncertain steps led him completely by chance to the country hill which dominated the town, he discovered that the bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln which had been erected there was gone, its marble pedestal appearing wholly desolate and forsaken in the glare of the spotlights. So the "President," this copper Abraham Lincoln, was that strange and mysterious nocturnal visitant! The informer was duly rewarded with a substantial sum of money. When questioned, he explained that his name was Judas. His last name: Iscariot.

Mercurios Bouas

He gets down on his knees and opens the chest, and while holding up the lid with one hand, he uses his free hand to sort and rummage through whatever's inside.

—What have you got there? I ask.

He turns to me:

—*Lettere d' amore*, he tells me.

Then:

—You are not interested?

—Oh, but of course, you know . . . , if it has to do with love, I answer.

Whereupon, very slowly, he begins to take out sundry articles one at a time, with extreme care, and to exhibit them before me.

He first pulled out a heap of fabrics that looked like velvet, but all mixed up, some embroidered and others all one color.

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Next, a decaying mattress, and finally, letting go the lid, he brought forth the corpse, well-preserved, of a man, and set it down on the floor. What particularly impressed me with regard to this corpse was the smooth and lustrous whiteness of the skin, as well as its wild shock of hair, and the fierce, drooping mustache.

Dance Stately and Sentimental

C'est le bal de l'abime ou l'amour est sans fin;
Et la danse vous noie en sa houleuse alcove.
—Alfred Jarry

The great poet Calphoglus was not merely that peerless pedagogue of speech and dream with whom we are all so well acquainted. He was (and this is but one of the many obscure and hushed-up sides in the lives of poets) a great, nay, a very great, musician as well. Ever, to be sure, with his own remarkable, flowery style. It was he, of course, who first conceived of utilizing the piano as a wind instrument. To perform even the most demanding piece of music in this manner, he would first of all assume the disguise of a marble statue, which would preferably be erected in some lonely and forsaken garden. Thereupon, just as the crimson shades of sunset began to span the sky, a tiny hiding place would surreptitiously be hollowed out in the statue's back, just large enough to accommodate a young boy, so that when he spoke it would seem as if the statue itself were speaking. Then the poet, having breathed his worldly last, would take hold of a large hammer, a "Sledge-hammer," with his two muscular hands, and, while panting with a desperate urgency, proceed to beat away mercilessly upon the piano, which would thereupon be shaken to pieces. Immediately, sighs could be heard to echo from deep within the iron hulls of ships. Birds would emit terrible shrieks in their fright. Sheet metal whistled in the wind, as a savage

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gale vaulted them high above the roofs of warehouses. Nothing was spared this fearful wrath of the Lord, from the haughtiest palace with its soaring archways, to the laborer's humblest prayer. A bit of gossamer lace alone would fall spontaneously, on the half-hour, to half-veil the warm flesh of beautiful women. Lovers had been taking their lives uninterruptedly since morning. Fountains gushed forth where previously only these few words had been inscribed: "name in fine-print," or "in the name of," or again, "helpless to depart." On one night in particular, every street-light in Boeotia was extinguished, and soon even they were washed away by the sea. And when the poet, at the very height of his lyrical frenzy, calmly laid aside that terrible sledgehammer, gentle Tranquility would descend over the world, with luminous green shells adorning her long braids of gold. The piano had fulfilled its mission, and was subsequently transformed—this too quite spontaneously—into a row of brass candlesticks, as well as a row of Doric columns, alternately red and white, and a row of big, tragic female eyes, strikingly beautiful, and each pair a different hue. Superfluous to add, perhaps, as a vital supplement, and out of respect for the truth, as well as for its rehabilitation, that the great poet Calphoglus has in fact been of no use to me here except as a pretense, a mere pretense. The reason being that the poet, and the statue, as well as the little boy, and the gallow's tale I've just related, have from the very start been no other than myself, and myself alone, perhaps in some ancient, or even perhaps in some recent, indeed, the most recent of times.

Translated from the Greek by Martin McKinsey

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Five Poems by G.F. Jonke

Lethargic Apperception I

My father was a forester in the Alpine woods
and also in the Andes. He roamed about the
underbrush, rode a horse and carried a thin
iron wire that he painted with glue to poke
in the tiny holes of treetrunks so that worms
and bugs would stick to it: my father was
the servant of woodpeckers, woodpeckers were
the servants of my father.
My father rode a horse, and one day . . .
and one day . . .
and one day . . .
two eagles plunged from the sky and grabbed
my father by the shoulders with their talons,
ripping him from his horse and pulling him up
into the clouds only to shake him loose way
off in the cosmos.

Lethargic Apperception II

And
like you said,
We'd been locked up by the police
for brawling.

Then,
like you said,
we'd been sprung by two pals,

Who,
like you said,

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had dynamited the back wall of the cell,
which naturally would have caused quite a
bang, and I, being dead drunk, had asked only
if someone had knocked, and who in the world it
might be.

The Town

I always connect this town with streetcars,
though no streetcars ever ran here. One might
conclude that streetcars did run here, though,
for how else would I come upon the idea to
connect this town with them?

Yes, streetcars once ran in this town, and
they ran from the train depot to the cemetery
and from the cemetery to the train depot, and,
when I think especially hard on it, down to
the lakeshore and to the sailboat landings and
to the entrance of a bathing establishment with
clothes cabinets and bath houses constructed
from brown wooden planks, planks that gave off
at certain times of year, especially in fall, a
particularly intense odor of tar.

The Town of Torsaric Acriby: Construction Site (I)

My father was a painter and a whitewasher.

He received a commission to paint the rooms of the
newly built house next to ours.

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He portrayed portions of our garden on the walls and included meadows and flowers so life-like that the people moving in mistook portions of our garden for the portrayal.

And then one night the insects and other inhabitants of our garden moved into the new house on whose walls portions of our garden were portrayed.

Disturbed, the residents of the new house left their accommodations. From the new house next to ours one could hear the drone of bumblebees and wasps, the chirping of crickets and grasshoppers, and there was talk of ants and ant caravans, of salamanders and lizards that built in nooks of painted plaster.

It was the general opinion of all that such creatures had no business whatsoever in the new accommodations.

The Town of Torsaric Acriby: Construction Site (II)

The crane creaks. The crane is 100 feet high and painted yellow.

The crane operator laughs when now and then a load slips from the hook and falls to the ground, burying one of the construction workers.

A dump truck comes up then to carry off the rubble along with the construction worker.

The pounding that dump truck bin receives is worth noting. Also worthy of notice: the slogan of the

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employment agency (''WE NEED WORKERS!''), the rush of the unemployed construction workers wanting to apply for the slot just made open, the crowding, the sighs of those turned away, the triumphant cry of the one signed on.

They say that the crane operator is in league with the unemployed construction workers.

Whenever the crane operator aims a falling load at a construction worker, he is taken out to a fancy restaurant that evening and a party is thrown in his honor by the unemployed construction workers.

The unemployed construction workers love the crane operator and try to curry his favor. They know that their fate hangs on him, for whenever the crane operator aims a falling load at a construction worker, the number of unemployed construction workers will be perceptibly reduced.

Translated from the German by John Michel

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Judit Tőth

Seine Wharves Southeast

The town's southeastern edge.
Tolbiac Bridge down there.
Endless freight terminal.
A grid of powerlines and rails
over a world's end.
Seine's moonscape at its darkest.

Coal depots, industrial docks.
Warehouses, clinkercolored forms of construction materials,
mountains of ballast, of rock, of sand.
And the gigantic, galvanized container: Béton de Paris.

On both banks the polyglot poetry
of public works. Empty barracks,
corrugated roofs: a hurriedly-deserted
settlement. Silent, a village in a war zone,
succumbing.

These gray slabs, tanks, walls,
timbered houses, their windows boarded up—
the Corillon Corvol Works'
storage, multifloored boxes
out of some horror movie. Improbable.

Shacks and barracks. The wine market's
hill of hogheads. On a tower wall: FIRST AID
FOR DROWNING. My way home
every day.

translated from the Hungarian by Jascha Kessler

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Márton Kalász

Legacy

I don't see my mother dancing—
in my thoughts she still trims vines
sprayed blue with copper sulfate
for her two bags of wheat, eight bushels rye.
I don't know if her young face
was lovely, if the other tenants
admired her dragonfly form,
or if my blonde father tethered his horse only
at our cabin on the wild Whitsun ride.
I just see her in the wintry dawn
chopping cornstalks at the stove
or patching sacks in the stilled yard;
I see her at evening in the vineyard
secretly taking flowers for my dead father.
Such memories pour over me,
and whirl me round fiercely now—
my mother, whom none could help,
in the darkness of whose flesh
the cancer spread its deadly arms,
who left her son this legacy.
This is not to blame her; not one curse
ever left her lips, I know. . . . Only, poverty
took it all from her vein-roped hands.
Half a day she walked to find me, a hand
at some far-off farm, bringing me her spared potatoes,
spending her scant savings on my studies;
and when I scanned my first lines
at the window something silvery
glowed in her eyes—joy.
And then she was gone, never to see
the first book. I could thrust no money
secretly beneath her bolster, for a dress, for salt—

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her bones in the graveyard
moldered to fat silent clay; no flowers force their roots
in summer where her forehead used to be.
And I carry her legacy for good:
on my face the mark of sorrow,
in myself humility's soundless load;
until I die I shall not forget
that world of grinding poverty—
in the field we are walking
like yoked horses together forever.

translated from the Hungarian by Jascha Kessler

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Mahler

David Glines

Mahler was on his deathbed.

The house had many rooms—some large and drafty with high ceilings; others small, airless, windowless, mere closets, "animal chambers," some said. There were numerous paintings of the Alps, alpine horns, goatskins, bear rugs, long smoking pipes, cuckoo clocks, hats with feathers and large brims. Yodeling drifted from room to room and the distinct smell of lemons being squeezed. And birds twiddling and chirping. In the living room: a boar's head—brown, very brown.

Mahler's house was contiguous with a lake and a park with a concert band. And a mountain. The house had lace curtains and birds perched on the numerous downspouts and gutters of the many-gabled roof. Plus: gargoyles.

Mahler, on his bed, stirred, whispered: "Did the scissors somehow move . . . by themselves?"

Mahler always took four long steps forward, two quick steps to the side and one backward.

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He rose up from his bed. "Seat no one after the music begins!" He fell back, still breathing. "Seat no one."

The organ grinder started to play in the park. The birds were singing.

The maid asked the nurse: "What was that he said . . . the scissors?" The nurse poured lemonade, the sugar was stuck to the bottom. Her hand started to shake, her whole face quivered. The two women embraced, crying.

The cries of women, a man holding a small child, the rumble of thunder behind the mountain, grass sprouting from rocks, the wind blowing flowers in the field, horse hoofs clopping on cobble stones, flickering gas lights, darkness, smells in the air (the whole world! too little and too much! and he did not want to repeat a single thing!), wandering in the rain, mist in the mountains, yearning for the spring sun, streets of the cities, signposts, a lamppost, standing on the corner. . .a man in a blue coat. . . .

"I remember once," the servant said, "there was a dinner, everyone in Vienna came. Everyone. Mahler was late—he'd been out, looking at the sunset, he said. Rearranging it, more likely. He came in, took four steps forward, then some short steps to the side and backward—quickly. He had on that awful tweed suit. The light glinted off his glasses. . . ."

"And I remember," said the cook, "the staircase. The staircase so steep and dangerous and no lamp about. It looked like it led to some awful spider-infested attic. (I think it did!) You expected some mad lodger to come rushing down it at any moment announcing his diabolical experiment a success. But that did not happen."

"Yes, I remember about the staircase," the servant said. "There was a dinner, everyone in Vienna came. Mahler made one of the guests go up the staircase then called the guest back down. Then he told the guest to go up two steps at a time. The guest started up again, Mahler called him back down only to tell him to go up three steps at a time. The guest didn't do it right or fast enough. Mahler grew angry and started to strike at the backs of the guest's legs with a

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baton. The other guests objected and Mahler started striking at THEIR legs . . . ."

"Yes, yes," the cook interrupted, "and then the mad lodger came rushing down the steps with spider webs all over him announcing the success of his diabolical experiment."

"Those dinners—!" the servant said. "I recall one. Everyone in Vienna came. Mahler came in late, yelled at everyone to sit up straight at the table, then cast a cold eye along the rows of guests to see if anyone elderly had happened to slip in. Woe to any gerontians—he'd drive them out with his baton. Then he would announce the order of eating. Most peculiar. Hardly anything was served at first . . . ."

"Scraps. Seaweed, Mountain Thistle, Alpine Berries . . . "

"Yes, yes . . . The Master carefully identified them all, sprinkling holy water on them AND the guests. He should have—they were starving to death in His Presence. Ah, but then . . . ! Heaping bowls, buckets, kettles, kegs. Mahler admonished the guests to eat in the order he prescribed. Yet he himself would contradict the order. Just as the guests were settling down to pheasant Mahler ordered it away and substituted, for no earthly reason, goose! Then it was goose, goose, goose until hell itself would have turned it away. Then the goose was snatched away and lo! the pheasant magically reappeared. 'Pheasant!?' the guests complained. 'We were getting used to the goose.' Mahler smiled and started striking at their wrists with his baton. Then came the cabbage—oh, the cabbage. Cabbage, cabbage and cabbage on cabbage. Miles of cabbage. A guest (with a curious Viennese smirking smile) whispered to me: 'Tundra, is it not?' I replied: 'Yes, it is not.' By that time Mahler had long since excused himself."

"He had other houses, other guests," the cook said.

"His daughter had played with the scissors, cut something. Mahler, usually so strict, was so . . . ."

The door opened, someone came in, said that Mahler was very, very ill . . . no, he was dead.

The cuckoo burst out of the clock, the wind blew through

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an open window. The cries of women, a man holding a small child, the rumble of thunder behind the mountain . . . (the whole world! too little and too much! and he did not want to repeat a single thing!) . . . a man in a blue coat standing on the corner, in the darkness, in the rain. The organ grinder started to play in the park.

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Portfolio

Phantom Buildings

Richard Haas

Richard Haas had always wanted to be an architect. His great uncle was Frank Lloyd Wright's stone mason, and Haas studied at Taliesin for two summers before he took up art at The University of Wisconsin. Haas began as an abstract painter, but his prints which carefully recorded the elegant facades of Soho's cast iron buildings were his first works to receive attention. Haas went on during the late '60's to do architectural portraits of The Dakota, The Hoboken Terminal Building and the beautiful Victorian houses in Galvaston, Texas. His fascination with structures led him out of the studio; his Beaux Arts mural at the Corner of Prince and Green Streets in Manhattan which reiterates the front facade of the building is only one of his ongoing mural projects.

In a recent show at Brooke Alexander, Haas embellished the plain white room with silk screened egg and dart mouldings and panels to mask exterior and interior walls and create trompe l'oeil effects.

Haas says that the idea of painting the shadow of one building onto another began about two years ago:

> My first site proposal of this nature remains the most outrageous: to paint the shadows of the Empire State building and the Chrysler building on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in a one-to-one proportion. These shadows would serve as a relative measuring scale and as a way of memorializing the lovely architectural ancestors on the rather severe surfaces of their larger descendants. The idea then evolved into a more apt and ironic form of memorial—to point the shadow of a destroyed monument of architecture on a wall near where it stood, thus returning the shadow if not the substance of the building to a site where it should have remained.

Right now the project exists only in the renderings reproduced on the following pages. Haas' projects have a way of becoming realities, though, and it will be no surprise to his admirers to actually see the World Trade Center transformed into a witty, sad memorial to an august architectural forbear.

ALEXANDRA ANDERSON

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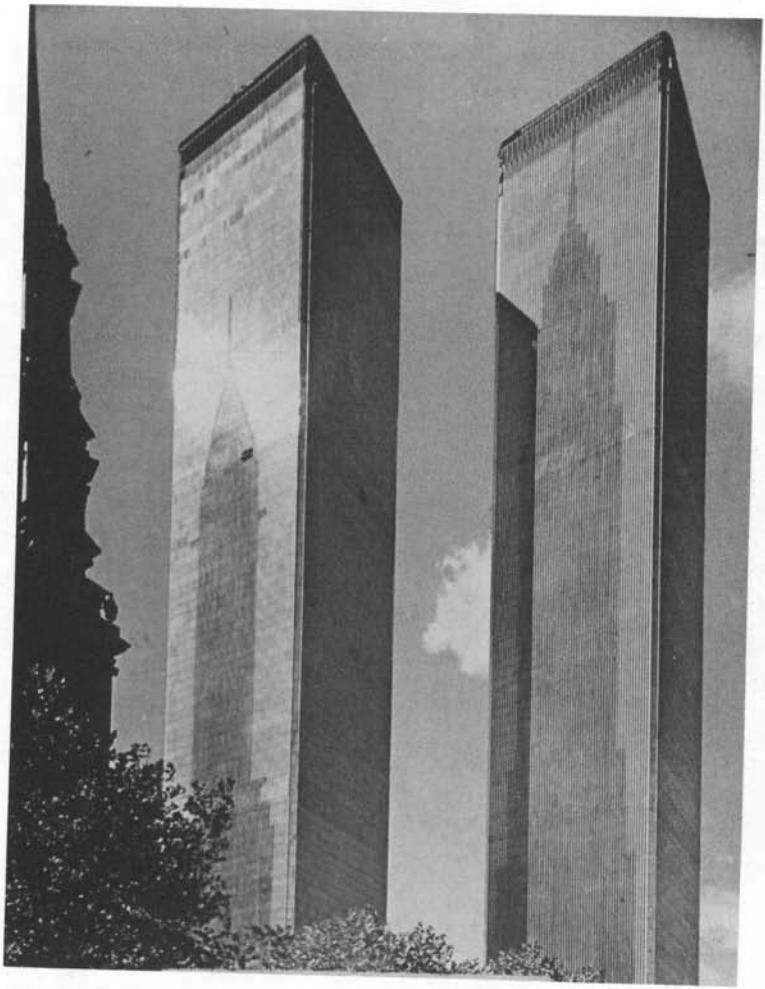

Proposal # 1

To paint the shadows of the Empire State and Chrysler buildings on the North sides of the World Trade Center Towers one-to-one in a deep silver tone, darker than the surface of the towers. (1975)

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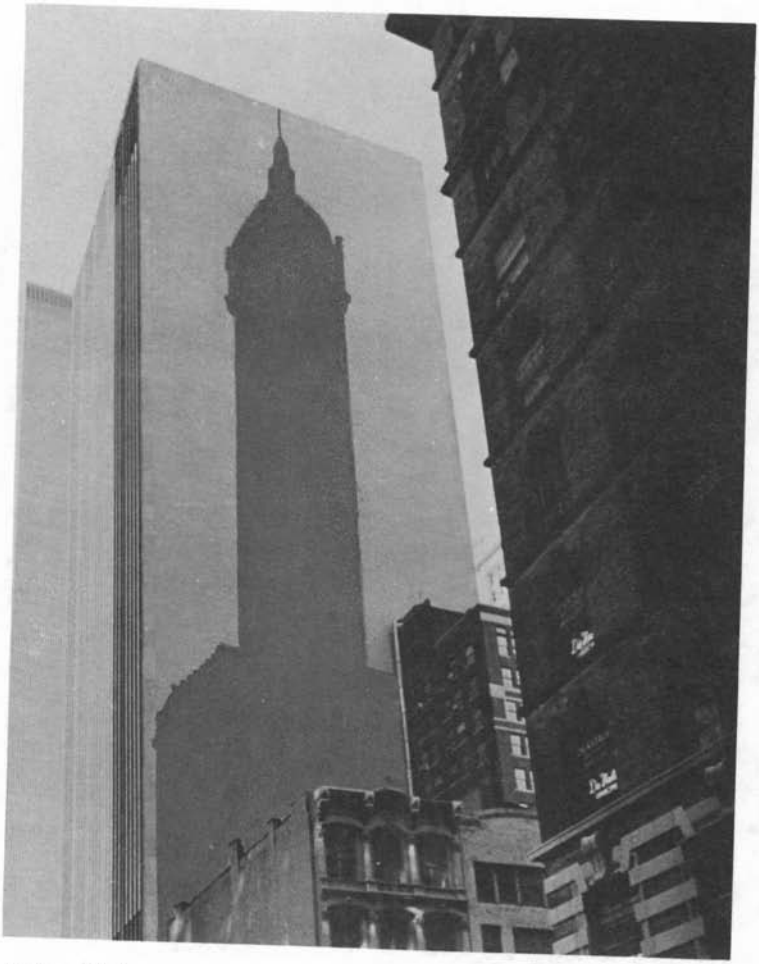

Proposal #2

To paint the shadow of Saint John's Chapel on the wall of a building at the corner of Varick and Beach near where it stood from 1803 to 1819. (1976)

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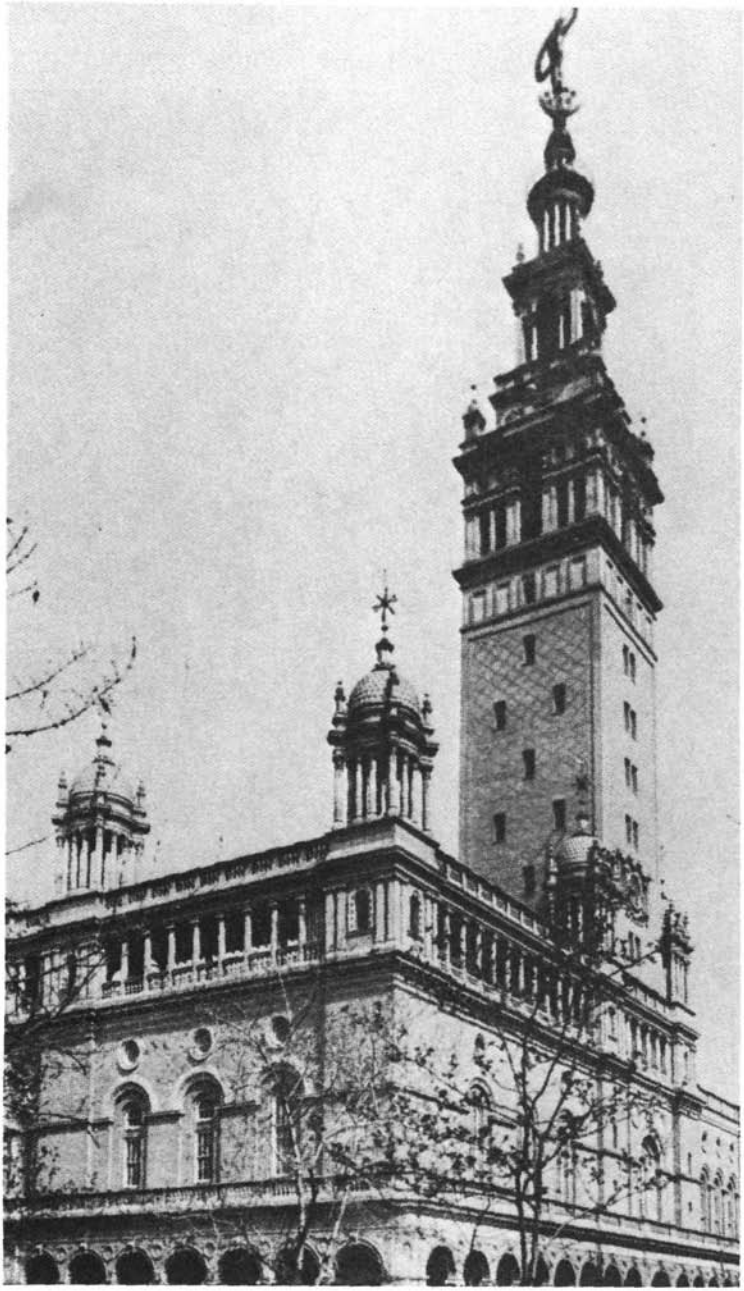

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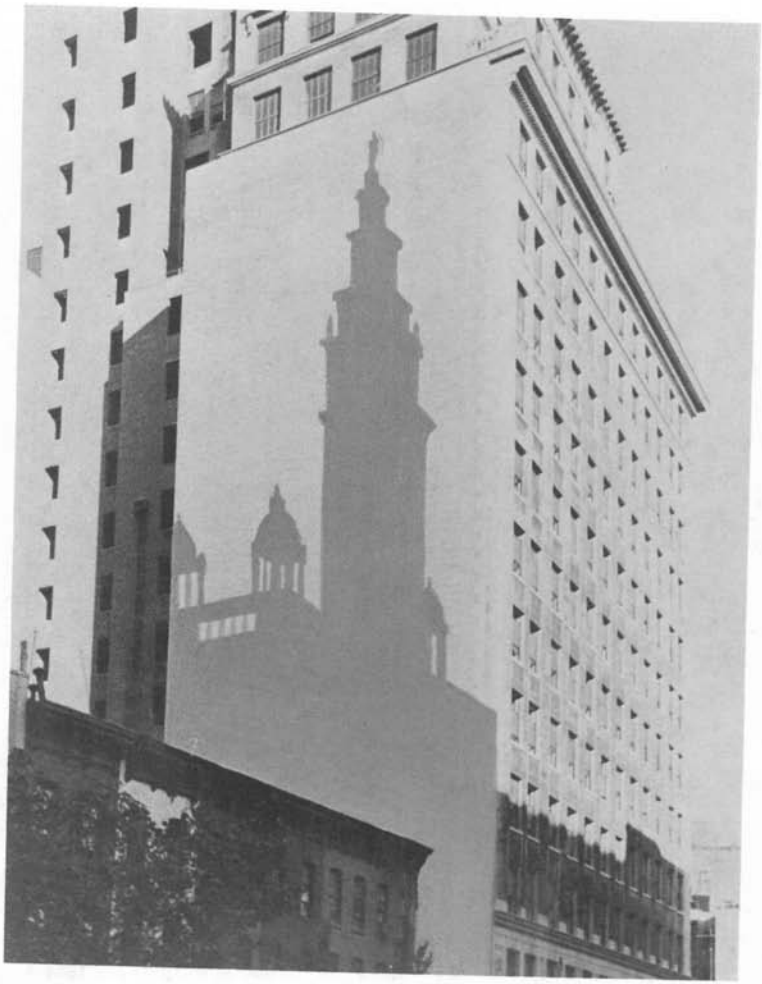

Proposal #3

To paint the shadow of the Madison Square Garden Tower, formerly at 26th and Madison Avenue on the West wall of a building on the corner of 26th and Lexington. The Original building was by McKim, Mead and White and was torn down in 1925. (1976)

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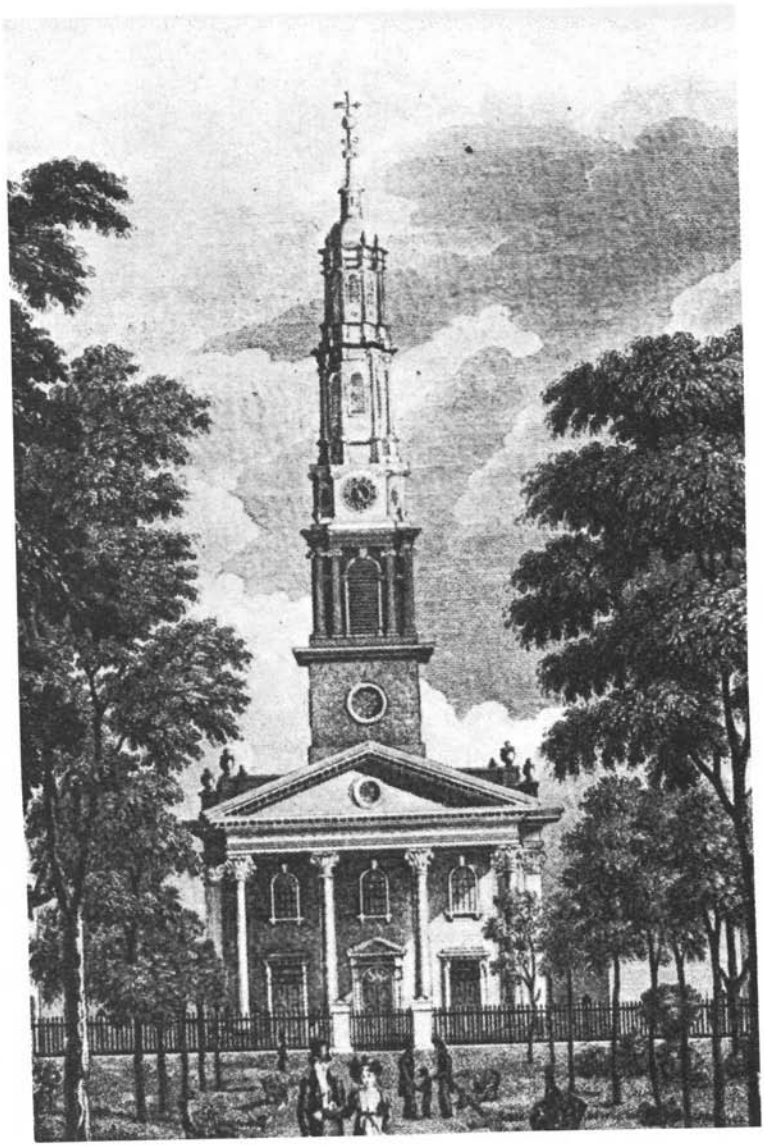

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Proposal # 4

To paint the shadow of the Singer Tower by H.B. Flagg (town down in 1967) on the East wall of the Woolworth Annex at the corner of Dey and Broadway. (1976)

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Mr. S

Don Bredes

Owning the proper gun is very important to someone like me who does not need one and who is usually inclined to repress his more suggestive wants. (By "suggestive" I refer obliquely to what sorry lacks and faults of which such wants might be seen as evidence. This is not to say I haven't lacks or faults. Of course I do, though I conceal them well. They are of incidental origin and have become ineradicable whorls in the thumbprint of my character.)

So, the importance of the proper gun. Let me say again I have no need in the practical sense for any gun. Were this not the case, any gun would do. A rifle of some kind would probably be appropriate. A rifle takes little time to master, has functional range and accuracy, and is, in the minds of most, a forgivable possession. But I am indifferent to rifles generally, and, although peering among the trees for the hushed shapes of animals appeals to me in some basic way, I am not a hunter. Moreover, I would not collect guns. A collector's passion focuses not so much on the object as on

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the continual acquisition of it. At no time could my job require the use of a gun, nor is there anything in my house that would tempt a thief, other than the gun itself. In short, then, I want one gun not for what a gun is able to do, but for its gunness, because it is a *gun*.

It is a Smith and Wesson Model K Masterpiece .22 Magnum six-shot revolver with 8.5-inch barrel, blued frame, fluted cylinder, case-hardened competition hammer and trigger, oiled and checked walnut handle-grips with silver S & W monogram, steel blade front sight and U-notched rear sight, adjustable for elevation and windage, and coupling dowel extractor pin. Its total length is 13.75 inches; its weight is 41 ounces, unloaded. (Also, I have a dark, tooled leather holster and cartridge belt.) It is, as they say informally, a *Smith*. I've named him Mr. S.

For me, Mr. S is very much the proper gun. He has a no-nonsense, yet princely look to him. His color, a result of bluing, is an iridescent indigo. Ordinarily, he is cold to my fingers. He shimmers under the light, and in a complicated way he smells of certain oils, gun-powder, and of high-grade steel. He does not pack inordinate fire-power, "magnum" notwithstanding, since he is a small-bore weapon, but it pleases me to mention he can put a sizable hole in something.

I do not, however, allow him to put holes in things very often. Anyway, I haven't in a long while, though I live in mountain country where the reports of gun-fire are sounds as natural as the twittering of bird-song, and where a gun is exercised as regularly as a city dog. So, for example, if I were to step from my house buckled into my gun for a jaunt into the woods behind my house or into the fields below it, anyone chancing on me would think nothing of it. In fact, he might well be in the company of his own gun—of which I would think nothing in turn. But, whatever the local attitude toward fire-arms, I find shooting only faintly enjoyable.

Do not imagine, by the way, that my woods and fields are aswarm with armed men. I very rarely meet anyone walking

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about on the land, and only once did I encounter a man when my gun was along. I was poised in my driveway blasting away from thirty yards at a row of bottles I'd placed in a bank of snow, when behind me I seemed to sense someone watching. Turning my head, I recognized the rural delivery mailman, standing many yards away at the juncture of my driveway and the snow-packed dirt road. Or rather I recognized his white truck, against which he leaned with his arms folded. His stance did not change as I rounded to face him. He wore a red knit cap. How long had he been watching, I wondered. I'd been shooting raptly for some twenty minutes, and I'd got to listening to the flat, hard bark of each charge, gone into the air almost before I saw the bottle crumple, as though the wind had blown it into pieces. All my thoughts had been on Mr. S, on his breath-taking precision and elegance. With an eye to the mailman, I cleared the cylinder of the empty cases, and fitted my gun into the holster, which, at the time, I wore over my shoulder. The mailman straightened then, gave me an expressionless nod, pulled open the truck's door, and climbed in. Like a person clearing his throat, the engine caught, then blared, releasing a milky plume of exhaust. He drove off.

At once it occurred to me (and at once I scolded myself for permitting it—after all was this not my land?) that the man's look and manner had seemed somehow disapproving, or, in any case, over-attentive. I told myself such an idea was based on pretty loose reckoning—since I could not see his face at all really—and also probably on some deep fault of mine. Besides, even allowing the possibility of his disapproval, I could not assume he'd disapproved of Mr. S. If anything, it would have been the bottles, broken glass and all that. Had the mailman not left so quickly, I could have explained to him that in May, when the snow has disappeared and the ground is dry, I'll come with a bucket to collect the pieces—though actually I'd given no thought to doing that. Bottles in fact are the key to the small pleasure I derive from shooting. Struck squarely, a bottle is finished. I think of this as satis-

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fying to my gun. The many shots necessary to destroy a tin can are frustrating to my gun, even though one hit leaves holes front and back through which you could pass a carrot. So, Mr. S performs only when I've accumulated enough jam jars or wine bottles (at least a dozen) to make an outing worthwhile. True, sometimes I may carry my gun into the woods or fields, but then he lets off no more than a round or two.

Our activities to the side, I'll confess now bluntly that I have not until recently come to grips with every feature of his gunness. For example, the chore of cleaning him was often gratifying, but altogether dull. I was careful to disguise this feeling while I was busy with his brushes, oils, rags, and patches. I hummed a tune and kept a glass of wine at hand to lighten my mood. More significant, however, was my unsettling awe of him, of his severe efficiency which argued against the grace I would have had him display.

Always with him it was the same: my breath half-drawn, I squeezed the trigger, never sure when the cocked hammer would leap, and then, BANG—a nudge of my palm, a twist of smoke—his work was done. I was left with nothing. Of course, preliminarily, I had tucked in each cartridge . . . leveled his steady muzzle at the target . . . but afterwards there lingered no subtle taste of our rapport. Where was the tense communion of purpose as between the archer and his bow? Do other gunmen wonder too?

Last was the matter of killing. For what is a gun designed if not to kill? Even if it were fair to say that my own gun is designed more specifically for target-work, how could I reconcile myself to its geneology? While the rifle, except in war, has always been mainly a hunter's weapon, the handgun, since its invention nearly 500 years ago, has been a mankiller. Never was it intended for anything else. Still and all, my gun and I have reached an understanding of a kind.

Several weeks ago I was awakened late in a black, still night by the shriek of a rabbit. An owl has him, I thought, or a

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bob-cat. The darkness impressed me enough so that fleetingly I doubted my eyes had opened. The iron wheels of a freight drummed miles away in the valley along the river. When I turned myself onto my right side so that I could face the window, I was able to distinguish the denser dark of the wall from the night that seemed pressed against the panes. Only moments later I awoke startled again. My room was now crossed with shadows and lit silver by a moon. Thinking I had to get a look at it, I slipped from beneath my quilt and padded to the window. There it hung, a nearly full disk, just above the mountain's shoulder and soon to pass beyond the bank of cloud that reached from the mountain over the valley sealing me from every star. The trees stood in relief against one another, and the snow all over sparkled blue. In my room I could see well—yet nothing was plainly visible. There was no color, only the grainy white-to-black of a newspaper photo held too close to the eye. As I put my back to the window, I saw him, his concentrated gun-shape, lying on my bed. My breath caught. How could this have happened? He lay there, poised it seemed, atop the quilt. I went to the bed, knelt on the exposed corner of sheet, took him up in both hands, and swung the cylinder out of the frame. It was empty. I sighed to myself. The moonlight slipped from the room. Had I, frightened by the rabbit's scream, walked in my sleep to the bureau drawer where Mr. S then reposed on a folded towel, lifted him from it, carried him to my bed? Was that possible? Or, I wondered crazily, had he come to me on his own? I set him on the nightstand, muzzle to the wall, where I found him in the morning exactly so.

In the weeks following that particular incident I paid no special attention to my gun. Sometimes I would discover I hadn't looked at him at all for many days at a time. Nevertheless, I'd absorbed the sense of owning him, and it tainted my thoughts like herbs in a soup. I knew (so I thought) I understood him, how he lay ready in that drawer like a genie, feeling something that he would not perceive as patience. Mr. S came to be less a guest who needed diversions and more

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a friend who shared my house. I went about my routine, and he went about his. I assumed he did at least, without having any idea at all what his routine might be. And somehow I did not bother to think much about it.

That comfortable time ended for us one evening when I came home unhappy at how the day had gone, or perhaps still disquieted by some odd dream of the night before, or angry at something I'd found in my mail—who knows? Without giving a thought to food, I downed glass after glass of wine and watched through my broad sitting-room window as the day turned grayer. Since dawn, the sky had been like wax, and the sun had no shape behind it. Below in the valley I began to hear the rip and buzz of the snowmobiles, the winter toys of this mad, mountain people. Then they were visible far away out in the darkening field of snow, small torpedoes with amusement park colors emerging one after the other from a break in dense woods.

Usually they had seemed content to chase like puppies through the field, furrowing the snow, but that night, their headlamps lit and jouncing through the dusk, they came at my house, at me. I careened into my bedroom to the bureau. I yanked Mr. S from his repose. I plugged his cylinder with two or three cartridges and made my way back to the sitting-room. They still came, now with a noise like chainsaws. What possessed them? I pulled open the window. I leaned out. On the sill ice cracked. The sudden cold singed my nostrils. They came on, roaring, lights blazing like torches. I thrust my gun into the air, aimed him upward, and fired, and fired again. The crashes were tremendous. I turned about. I hurled Mr. S toward the wall. He thudded into the paneling, clanged against a brass lamp, fell into a pile of newspapers. I stumbled to him, snatched him up, and held the flat of him to my cheek. We both trembled.

Late the next morning, a Saturday, as I sat down to a plate of eggs, I was surprised to hear knocking at my door. Usually I'm prepared for any visitors to my house—rare as they are—

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because my sitting-room and kitchen overlook the quarter-mile uphill approach through the sparse trees, but a snowfall had started in the night, and it filled the air like a fog. I knew it had made the drive impassable, too, except for someone on foot.

I could not at first recognize the man I saw through the door-glass. His features were shaded by the hood he wore over his head against the snow. I gestured for him to come in. With his boot, he cleared the snow from before the outer door, and opened it, while I pulled the inner door toward me. As the man entered, snowflakes darted along with him like flies around a cow. He stamped his feet. I saw his face was shaven close, but his beard was so heavy his jaw looked blue. He spoke my name and then handed me a paper-wrapped parcel. It was not heavy. I glanced at the writing on it, but the words, if I read them, did not stay with me.

He didn't know, he said, peeling back his hood, but it was his guess the plow last night just sheered my box right off. There was no sign of it down there whatsoever. He was the rural delivery mailman.

I told him such a mishap was not new to me, and I thanked him for his trouble, adding that, until the melt, I would stop in the village for my mail. He shrugged. At once I felt constrained to offer him coffee or a brandy. A jolt would do him right, he said. He pulled off one glove with his teeth.

I led him to the kitchen, took the decanter and a glass from a cupboard, and set them on the table at the place opposite mine. In his loosened coat the mailman stood resting his bare hands on the chair. He did not reach for the brandy.

"Please sit and help yourself," I said, and I was suddenly angry to find myself ready to apologize for breakfasting so late. I sat and took up my fork quickly, but the wet, wrinkled eggs, the toast daubed with purple jam. . . I could not eat. The mailman seated himself. His chair groaned. I met his eye and grinned over my plate to show my self-possession. A strand of egg clung like mucous to the tines of my fork.

The mailman poured an inch of brandy into his glass, took

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a sip and then a deep breath. In a soft voice he urged me to continue with my meal. For himself, he said, breakfast had become a bother since his wife left. A cereal now, or fruit, and that was all.

My head bobbed in a wash of thoughts. I said, "Well. Would you like some wheat flakes?"

"No," he said, "this is fine." He studied the brandy before his face, turning the glass in his fingers.

"Some raisins, then?"

"No, no," he said.

I tossed my fork into the sink, and as it rang there, I winced to think of Mr. S, of the silvery, disfiguring nicks he'd suffered on my account the evening before. I imagined him where he lay now on the sitting-room's braided rug, stoical, calm.

The mailman tilted the last swallow to his lips. Then, rising, he said my liquor was top-notch, but he had ground to cover, so he'd be on his way.

"Of course," I said. Already his back was to me. I pushed out of my chair.

He paused, head and shoulders swiveling to me, a hand held palm outward. "Eat. You eat," he said. "I'll find my way."

My plate yawned up at me like a mouthful of chewed food. I hurried to the hallway. The mailman was bent at the waist fitting his shoe into a rubber boot. On the umbrella stand was the package I'd received, though I could not remember setting it there. It looked as if it might contain a book. I held open the inside door, and suddenly felt the snow-water drawn from the floor against my stockinged feet. "Goodbye," I said. Outside, a wind had come up.

The mailman passed into the weather, saying he hadn't meant to be a bother. "You have a good, private home," he said, brandy spinning on his breath.

"Yes," I answered.

In the sitting-room a moment later I tried not to imagine what surprise waited inside the package under the brown

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wrapping, but there was no use in that. I took note of the postmark.

"It's yours. He brought it for you," I said to Mr. S. I stripped off the string and paper, and from a white box I drew a zippered, suede leather pouch, cut and sewn to my gun's dimensions.

Attached by cord to the zipper was a square tag that read:

PROTECT YOUR HANDGUN
—from moisture
—from scratches
—in storage
—in travel

I swore.

Beyond the window, the snow no longer fell. Instead, it streamed and swirled like bed-sheets flapping, and through it the mailman's moving figure pulsed into view and then faded with the gusts.

I went to Mr. S, dropped to my knees, and stroked him where he lay. I licked my finger and touched it to the glass-bright scar on his barrel. My right hand snatched him up. And through one eye I saw him at the end of my arm, far and black like a diminishing train. He pointed into the white, at nothing. My finger jerked the trigger—clink. Again—clink. Again—CRASH! My God! The window exploded. Snow blew in. "Treacherous!" I shouted, and I made as if to pitch him through the shattered pane. Instead, I fell back to the rug, aimed him up toward a ceiling beam, and gripped him long and hard until my fingers cramped. Overhead snowflakes flitted in at me and were lost in the room's heat.

I rose. I tucked my gun quickly into the new pouch and zipped it shut. I carried him to the hall closet and locked him inside a trunk with leather hinges where I keep extra blankets. Into the kitchen I went with the trunk key. When I'd wrapped it tightly in foil and then in plastic bags, I searched under the sink for a small bottle among the ones I'd saved to shoot. I chose an olive jar, still with its lid. The swaddled key fit with coaxing through the jar's neck.

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In the hallway I threw on my parka and laced my high boots. Already a drift had grown over the jamb and against the lower panel of the door. I pushed out, and the snow sliced like suds. It surged about my struggling legs as I trudged off toward the faint, tangled line of trees many yards from the house. Above me the blowing sang.

I stopped out of breath before the trees, dug the olive jar from my pocket, and without pausing flung it up over the branches. It flickered minutely and disappeared in the storm.

I retreated several steps, walking backwards, to fix the spot in my mind by noting the configuration of certain crossed limbs. How comfortable that key must be, I thought in a rush, lying warm, with no cares, on this cushion of infinite crystals and designs. And Mr. S, too, though he was hurt, was enough content I realized, to have been punished, forgiven, and left alone in the antique trunk, in suede.

I prayed that he had not shot the mailman. Following the trough the mailman had made in his shuffling up and down the driveway, I arrived at the place where I guessed I'd find him if he'd been so unlucky as to have been killed. But there was no sign of him, nor of his white truck further off in the road.

Of course, the next day, a glittering, blue Sunday, I was out in the raw air as soon as there was light, thrashing around in the fluff for the olive jar. That night I'd been sick to review my behavior of the days past, and I slept fitfully. I wanted only to free Mr. S. He was noble. I was moody, impulsive, given to tantrums. His lot, as the proper gun for me, as my gun, was always to bow to my whims, to submit to my mistreatments. He was loyal. I was cankered with faults. I scolded myself for being jealous of the mailman. I'd been so foolish. Even though all night in my dull imagination I'd rehearsed how it would look, its gold lid agleam in the white, the jar did not turn up.

So, that afternoon, I moved the antique trunk to the sitting-room and stayed by it, eating cheese and brown bread. I was embarrassed to think of the mad spectacle I'd

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presented a few hours earlier, tearing like a dog at the new-mounded snow. With my cheese knife, I sawed through the trunk's leather hinges. They parted easily, but on the other side the iron hasp resisted so that when I pried the lid I could just force my flattened hand inside. My fingers ran over the blankets until they touched him through the suede of the pouch.

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Dennis Saleh

Chameleon Ranch
from *100 Chameleons*

I post the sign
late in spring
drawn on sewn skins

The small hides
of ones I lost
make a quilt

that points in
a long arrow
back off the road

By April the ground
teems with heads
Rocks you think

till they blink
and you see the rows
and how many

Very much
like the original
dragon's teeth

Their tongues
might seem to be
petals lifting

Of the hundred or so
several varieties
that's the whole idea

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North American
reds and yellows
the Grey Anolis

I grow the original
the Madagascar
and the African

The Madagascar trained
will hang by its tail
from a pencil

You could hang beams
or rafters with them
like ornaments

The invisible
and transparent kinds
flutter the air

around them
like little winds
if seen at all

I don't raise the kinds
traveling shows sell
too fragile

When the shoulders
loosen in the earth
they're ready

I pull one free
from the soil
like a jeweled nail

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Run under faucets
they slip and curl
in my hands

They love the water
They wrap a tail
around a finger

a time or two
They ring my wrists
like bracelets

Eventually
they stack in small
glass boxes

It's like rainbows
seeing them stretch
up the slopes

The little coats
are like Joseph's
bands of color

I imagine a throne
studded with the
heads of lizards

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Three Poems by Greg Kosmicki

Lester Pyrtle Gets Snared By Sin and Caught in the Act By God in Old Man Mooney's Barn, Summer, 1956

for Bill Kloefkorn

In the July hot smelly horse manure dust
out behind old man Mooney's barn
that sits just at the outskirts of the town
Lester comes upon the treasure for which
he kept his eyes close to the ground
and searched for half the summer:
a yellowed tag of a corner of a page
of a *Police Gazette* ! And there, on the cover
in blushing faded pink,
caught in the hand of some sort of
nasty villain Lester hates who holds
a blood-dripping knife high in the air, is the semi-
almost naked nearly bare-ass tit
of some silently screaming woman—
and more! inside! Inside the barn
Lester smells the hay sweet smell and
dust almost enough to make him vomit
and the dark makes it hard
to see, and them really all mostly
covered up, those tits, but
what details are lacking Lester's
mind supplies, all that much more
wicked since he can only imagine—
he's never seen a picture of the whole thing
or even a real one except on Mrs. Dorsett's cows
next farm away from Uncle Henry's

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and that's not quite the same idea.
But God Almighty Jesus strike me down
if there's anything the matter with this—
and God does, too, only in the form
of Link Fowler, town leather jacket tough
who just now had the idea
of breaking Mr. Mooney's eggs while
cutting across an open field
passing the barn and chicken sheds on the way
to the Saturday afternoon matinee.
And who's just mean enough to laugh
and spread it all over school next fall
and all the way down to the pool hall
that he caught Lester Pyrtle
in old man Mooney's barn Saturday
with his most nasty thoughts exposed
and his imagination pumping a mile a minute
and Lester Pyrtle can only laugh he's so surprised
so much he can't close his eyes
so much he finally closes them and cries.

. . . And Then, Suddenly, Apropos of Nothing. . .

—Flaubert, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Stendahl, and others

A cold rainy March morning came.
Two birds woke up and saw the sun
that comes up every morning
regular as a piss hard on,
and wrestled over a worm that had been
lying frozen on the ground.

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A man thrilled to the grating engine noise
of his favorite gas-power toy airplane,
watching it swoop and duck and strain
at its cord. It stopped
when he pressed off his alarm clock.

A city starts rumbling to life again
apropos of nothing but that it does this
6 days a week through no fault of its own
means nothing to me or it.

Somewhere in a crib a baby is laughing then crying.
Elsewhere men are hunched over fires
counting their night's work,
waiting for the sun to then
suddenly rise apropos of nothing
while somewhere else a toaster goes on the blink.

People board buses, start cars.
Garbage men clatter by, milk men go home.
Others put on pants or dresses, button coats,
and then, suddenly, apropos of nothing
write a note and shoot themselves.

Today

Today is beautiful the birds singing
in the trees where they have landed or in the air when
they are going, the sun wrapping its fingers
around the earth like a lover's nipple
and tweaking, the dirt smells of all the stock car
tracks I have ever been to and of all the fields
I have ever plowed coming up from the ground

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and hanging invisible in the air with the grass smell
of all the football fields I have ever had
my face rubbed in, mingling with the heat waves
rising from car bodies in the sun like the heat
one sees over toasters shimmering on crisp Autumn mornings,
but it is Spring, and there should be no Autumn imagery in
this poem, this poem about life, about smells, about
vibrancy, about the dust motes I can raise like
little asteroids just by whacking the couch a good one,
about the light of the sun that gives those motes an aura,
a glow, a transcendence over their humble forms, a rebirth
into the dirt of the air, a falling to the rug, a life in
vacuums, in garbage, a life on dirt roads or asphalt
highways, on the bottoms of beggars' shoes, on the tops of
generals' eyebrows, in the nylons of naked prostitutes
gyrating on their beds in shady downtown hotels, the light,
the dust, the smells, the stuff of life that I
have so often failed to notice, even when it has come to me
like a friend, like my mother or father, like an old drunk
in a corner booth, like my brothers and sisters and wife,
like this Spring, which may be the fingers of the hands
of a god, or the absence of all hatred, or a bird,
cutting a path across the sun.

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John J. Elliott

View from the Inside

Shall I roll the universe
into a ball?
Shall I roll you in between
my fingers, back and
forth and forth?
I'll squeeze you from my hands
rather than wash them.
Rub you, oily dirt, away;
long skinny round and fat
pieces of clay.
Shall I slowly slide
you against my thumb,
tormenting, crushing,
and finally drop you,
flick you, fleck of nose crust,
invisible hidden
in the thick carpet at my feet?
Should I scrape you off my fingers?

But the allotted time was up;
they helped him from his chair
and took him back to his room.

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Two Poems by R.S. Levine

"Plastic"

It's been suggested by the New Radicals
in America that perhaps the best, no,
the penultimate act would be, of all things,
to not act at all, to, ha, ha, just let this
honey-crusted Republic stew in its own juices.
As one who attempts to keep his finger
in the dike, so to speak, I find
such a proposition
to be
100% abhorrent to my very constitution.
I like to think that my position is understood,
particularly by fellow artists,
but when I see poems about "plastic"
it very nearly convinces me that, indeed,
I am fighting for a cause quite in vain.
I can only offer documentary evidence:
Now and then I teach Freshman English, and,
as a matter of course, after reading the past masters,
Jonson, Pope, Keats, you know who they are,
I, well, ask the kids to see what they can do.
Seventeen students enrolled in my class this semester.
Let's see now;
two wrote about love, which never came to be,
three dealt with the state of mankind, fallen,
two made it quite clear that they didn't plan on living
through the week, and the remaining ten considered "plastic"
from eight of the possible nine angles, failing to treat
only, as one might expect, the Aristotelian unities
of time, space and place, vis-a-vis "plastic."
As a matter of fact, to my knowledge
such a poem has never been written.

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Perhaps it's the last chance "plastic" has of
achieving cogent artistic form:
you can't tell about these things.

The All-Time Greatest Hit Is. . .

The Beach Boys haven't had a hit song in years
yet their albums continue to enjoy an extraordinary success.
Only the other day Korvette's had to place an emergency order
for "The Beach Boys' Greatest Hits," a favorite of the
holiday season.
I don't particularly enjoy long playing records.
Give me one song at a time, preferably on WABC, and
squeeze
it in between commercials.
"Greatest Hits" albums aren't that bad because if you want
you can pick a cut at random, and continue this practice over
years.
But a lot of albums are more thematic these days, and
consequently
you really have to listen to the thing all the way through.
This can be quite time consuming.
Jim Croce never went for this thematic stuff.
A gold record here, a gold record there, that's the way
it should be done. I found his untimely death to be very
unfortunate.

Who does that leave us with?
Paul Anka is good for a gold record now and then,
but he's gone sentimental.
Frank Sinatra has to have the worst song writers in the
business.
I think disco-soul is where it's at.
These exciting pieces have a sort of sexual throb that seems

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to reflect accurately these frenetic times.
Just the other day I visited one of those new night clubs
and did the bump to the songs of Rufus,
which could become modern classics.
That's an interesting question to consider, come to think of it.
Of all the hits to make the charts,
just what will survive, and what will merely fade away?
I would bet on the works of the Beach Boys and Jim Croce,
although the forgotten Animals could surprise everyone.
Given the technological wonders of modern times,
isn't it a shame we can't jump 10,000 years into the future
and see what is meant by Golden Oldie?

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The Wrong Delivery

Alan Ziegler

My shrink has an office in a walk-up above a pizza parlor. He's new in the business, and since he has very few patients as yet, and sometimes hours between appointments, he works part-time as a pizza chef. I didn't know that till one day I was early for my appointment and, famished, stopped in for a slice. There he was, distributing pepperoni, sausage, and mushrooms on a large pie, delicately dropping each morsel onto the cheese as if he were adding paints to the portrait of someone dear. Indeed, he kept looking at his customer with searching eyes, periodically making corrections in the sausage configuration.

He didn't give any indication that he recognized me, but when I ordered a slice with extra cheese, he gave me a calzone instead, saying, "Isn't this what I hear you asking for?" I took it and began eating. He pointed gently to the "Please Pay When Served" sign.

My shrink wasn't always a shrink. He was an interior

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decorator for twelve years. "Actually, I still am, only I now deal with smaller rooms," he kidded one afternoon as I jumped the cables in his car after he'd called to tell me he was stuck on the road: "I need your help to get to the office to give you help," he'd said.

He decided to become a shrink partly because he liked listening to people, but also because in his own therapy he had realized that he'd missed a lot of fun when he was a student. So he wanted a reason to go back to school. "And now, I'm out again, which shows that you *can* go back, but unless you keep getting research grants you can't stay very long." He was a legendary interior decorator, according to the friend who referred me to him. The people would often change as much as their apartments. "You're not comfortable looking chic," he might say. "Try some early American." And before he could finish with their rooms, they would be out buying a farm.

The phone rang in the middle of one of our sessions. He answered, then silence. Whoever was talking to him was affecting him deeply. "I understand," he said. "I'll be there as soon as possible."

He asked me if we could reschedule my session. "An emergency came up." I was never one to deny someone emergency help, so I said sure. He thanked me and changed into a white T shirt and apron.

In the second month of therapy I started to feel a great closeness to him. I really felt he *cared* and wanted to help. I walked in one day, plopped down, and started opening up for the first time:

"My heart has been dribbled the length of the court," I began. "It was bounced through a full court press, it went back and forth, side to side, eluded every obstacle somehow. It flew when it had to fly into someone's arms, and it deceived the grasps of those who meant it harm. It was pounded against the hardwood floor, suffering the pain because of that

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luscious goal it was heading toward. It was just about to make it, just about to soar free into the hoop, when. . . ."

"Go on," he said, "what happened?"

"It got stuffed."

That affected my shrink. He didn't know what to say. He just sat there, looking at me with the eyes of one who would rebuild the world for you—if it were possible to get enough good help. But he couldn't do it alone, and he didn't know what he could do. I could almost see the textbooks flash through his eyes, congesting his face, puffing it into a swelling of inability to help. He let out with a whopping sneeze, the beginning of a bout with the flu that caused the cancellation of our next three sessions.

In the fourth month of therapy, my shrink fell asleep. At first, I thought he had closed his eyes in a revery of concentration as I described the excruciating details of my dog choking on chicken bones when I was seven and the dog was ten. I approached a breakthrough in my dealings with death. "The dog lived a full life," I exclaimed. "Only his standards were different, and I can't evaluate his life by mine. Ten years, not much for a person, but, let's see, in dog years that made him . . . hmmmmm, say, how many dog years to one people year?" I asked the shrink. At that moment his shoulder slipped off the armrest of his lush leather chair and he fell backwards, shooting his legs outward, triggering the chair into its reclining position. That set off a bell that woke him. "Up and at 'em," he said, absent-mindedly.

Pretty soon, he began to snooze quite frequently through our sessions. It was three more months before I could bring it up with him, asking him tentatively, prefacing it by saying, "I'm probably over-reacting, but. . . ."

"It's part of the therapy," he said. "And you're making progress just by the fact that you brought it up." He began to doze.

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Once, after leaving him asleep in his chair at the end of a session (I always left promptly at the end of my session—time is money and I was never one to rip off a defenseless person), I realized I had forgotten my umbrella and went back into the office, quietly so as not to disturb him.

But he was up, writing furiously. I stood there, transfixed. I had only seen such passion in him once before, as I sneaked a look at him through the window of the pizza place as he twirled the soft pizza dough into the air, that moment before it lands perfectly back in his hands, that exquisite moment of letting-go, knowing that it's all going to fall back in place, and in better shape than when he let go.

As he finished writing, he looked up, not surprised to see me, as if he had willed me to leave my umbrella behind. "I must write my dreams right down, otherwise I forget them."

But it wasn't for another month that I learned the true nature of his therapeutic orientation.

"It's all in my dreams," he told me one morning as I hammered the last nail into the loft bed I was helping him build in his office. "I realized it's all in my dreams. Not in my patients' dreams. My gift is to receive signals that people mysteriously and elusively send out. Only I never quite knew what to do with these signals except to signal back confirmation of reception, and tell them what they're telling me. That was enough for an interior decorator, but I need more now. I need a wiser source, and the only source I know wiser than me is the me underneath."

During our next session, he showed me one of his dreams. It required a double session: one for him to sleep and one for him to write. At the end of the second hour, he showed me his dream entry:

> I am walking through a tunnel filled with live chickens, one of whom is going one-on-one with another chicken who looks like Earl Monroe. But the first chicken loses the ball out of bounds, and Earl Monroe disappears, laughing. The losing chicken is a woman. She has disappointed the other chickens.

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> I grab her and twist her neck off. I peel her down to the bones and break each bone to its smallest pieces. Then I eat the bones and vomit them all over my mother.

As I finished reading, I looked up and saw him looking back gleefully, as if he'd just handed me the House Special pizza, with six choices of extras. "See, all your problems result from your resentment to your mother for serving chicken the night your dog died."

I hated to correct him, but I had to tell him the truth, which I had previously avoided letting myself remember. But it surged upward: "My mother had hamburgers that night. She said the dog got the chicken bones out of the neighbors' garbage, but now I recall that our neighbors were vegetarians." Then it hit me with a shot through my nerves: The sound of my father drunk running out of the house, the squeal of the reluctant car asked to go too fast too soon, the terrifying howl of the dog seeing his death roaring toward him and realizing that it's a lot bigger than he is.

As I looked up, shuddering with the sweat of truth, I saw that my shrink had crawled up into the loft and was snoring away. But with added passion.

Late that night I sat at home resting temporarily comfortable on a thin cushion of peace. Something awful had left me, leaving a space for something better. I had a craving for pizza. I called for one to be delivered. When it finally came, the boy apologized, saying, "Ah, that chef, such a good with the pizza, fling it like there was dough with him in the womb, but I think he have another job because he doze off on the counter and then go ahead and burn your pie."

I opened the box. Inside were just pieces of burnt crust edges. And a note: "This was for your own good. By eating this whole burnt pie, I'm sure I'll have nightmares that will finally resolve your conflict with being an orphaned Catholic condom maker."

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The poor guy. He *is* overworked. He mixed up the deliveries. And some orphan probably got stuck with a chicken salad sandwich.

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Eight Poems by Frank O'Hara

A Doppelgänger

Do you mean that
my gaze is not a look
and my clothes decide
like a Delacroix banner
what will happen to-
morrow although they
are quite foreign to me
hide thoughtful flesh?

Do you mean that
my yellow hair like
thrashing wheat hangs
wild over my forehead
and blue limpets peer
above my cheekbones
Rilkean discoveries?

Do you mean that
one fierce hand drags
by a thumb from my
appendix while the
other photographs old
ladies and my black
eyes roll and swagger
down Washington Street?

Or do you mean that
my head is too high
I throw my plate about
the restaurant talk
too loud and bounce
the balls of my feet
my own worst enemy?

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Is it any of these my
friends you visit when
you think you think of me?

Chez William Kramps

I never seem to hear much, except Tschaikovsky.
What's the matter with me, especially on Saturday
afternoon? it seems that there's a park nearby
and people in it. But luckily they don't drop in
and one can pleasurably collect grievances while being
perfectly confidential and enjoying it a lot. Oh truss!
don't you feel yourself maligned? So do I, darling truss!
but I'm not, really. See that evil glint in my eye?
it's Evil, being friendly for its own sake, and mine.
Well, not being a hip-slinger, I don't need you, truss,
but I love you all the same, that is the same as I love
toothbrushes and jock-straps and inkwells and typography.
What I really love is people, and I don't much care whom
except for a few favorites who fit, which you understand.
It's like the sky being above the earth. It isn't above
the moon, is it? Nor do I like anyone but you and you.

Bill's Body Shop

Oh snows of only two months ago!
when will you fall back up into the sky
and fall down again like an airplane?

I put my passengers onto the plane
and then drove back to Palisades in the car,
the Palisades all hoary with the tears,

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and left a check with a note, Bill
being out, "Fix up the car and fix up
my heart, the thirty dollars is for that,"

but the mechanics couldn't find the
trouble, so how could they fix it up? Oh
saffron snows! leaves tumbling, two months!

and I never saw that car again, No,
I don't remember the license number either.
I remember the elephants passing, and snow.

Corresponding Foreignly

1
You may flaunt my looseness, you know
that I go whole weeks without, so, I
get depressed because I'm so easily distracted
from sex. It's not something you can keep
your mind on without losing it.

2
Certain eases appeal to me more than the flowering quinces
and your black pear branches dripping white petals.
I'm not a pastoral type any more, I take the subway
back and forth from beds to days or bed-in-the-day-time
and if pleased am a dirty flower at the end of ragtagging
it. "I hear you were downtown last night. It was just like
old times." What a thing to say in an elevator. I'd feel
rather more assured, though, if we were rolling in a field
screaming above the records and the Japanese lanterns.
I hate the country and its bells and its photographs.

3
When he went west we thought he'd be big in the movies
with his humanity kick. The others went off to another party

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but we went home and forgot each other in a good talk.
Then the radiators cracked and puffed and it did get warmer
but I dreamt of an anxiety the size of a public building,
something to race your car in and waken echoes. Did
you mention that you saw me dancing with a sculpture
last week
in the Bowery? It was an audition and we called ourselves
"The Bananas."

4
Four little rats came into the house
because it had grown so cold out,
and they knew they'd be allowed the run
of our lives in the winter
when the weather doesn't favor them.

5
I met him in Los Angeles
and after weeks of feverish love
couldn't remember what he looked like
if he was farther away than the john.

I wondered what he had done
to me. He was like a shrike.
I don't know if it was really love
and he's left Los Angeles.

6
I have a tic of thinking about it, if
they can really fine you for paying the rent
late. His photograph would have to be moved
to a new building, and by now it's the size
of a mural. It would take weeks. I won't.

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Maria Kurenko (Rachmaninoff Sings)

Oh night, to hear them once again
as if we were at Kyriena's and the moon
over the Hudson were blue no movie
for our lives are movie lives and our
responses movie retaliations for imagined
slights which are only Myrna Loy
worrying about the secretary whose wife
never loved her husband while the
secretary probably did but he doesn't
love her. That's what the floods of spring
are like, some stream that never cared about
a bridge comes along and takes it from
the bank that never noticed it anyway.
We are all so very very much mistaken.

A Renaissance Portrait of the Author

A courtier strides along, his feathers
straightening in the breeze. His boon
has been denied. From his clenched left
fist extends a mountain range as grim
as Atlas. He mutters so coherently that
a quartet of wind instruments is darkly
visible at the edge of the forest. He
puffs his cheeks to snort angrily but
the clouds scurry away in tatters.

Upon the right the brightness of the
court defies my technique, tingling
with business at the defeated courtier's
shoulder. The queen is leaning out
a casement kissing pigeons while
a smiling lady holds the queen's clean

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coif. The green pride at his feet glares,
forbids the courtier's looking back.
On his nape he bears the azure whole.

And the frivolous hunting party romp
at his mercy! He could easily topple
their trees with a kick of his velvet
right foot. A hand on his rapier betrays
a motive his hooded eyes and beardless
face will not easily resolve. Thoughts
eager as the hawk that pins the castle
to the sky flourish on pure spleen. Ah!
the sea behind his codpiece brews poison.

Attacca

To take up where you left off!
without a breath of separation
your new movement is begun.
The heart pulses on, developing
a future. You do not rest
your lips, your ears, your fingers.
The field is full of daisies
and the sun is shining greenly.
It is a musical development,
taxing and inspired, before
the old love has echoed away.
To the eager suggestion of a new
face. It will be a great movement!
begun warmly and without a pause.
You have carried yourself to a new
world, put off the final applause.

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Fou-rire

It really is amusing
that for all the centuries of mankind
the problem has been how
to kill enough people
and now
it is how
not to kill them all

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No Excuses

Ed Sanders

Books published by The Philosophical Library seemed high in catalog price for 1959, like ten dollars for an anthology of Buddhist texts, but you could always somehow pick them up for a song. He bought the *Being and Nothingness*, for instance, for two-ninety-eight from those pleasant stacks, the prices on the dust jackets often neatly scissored away along a diagonal, in the Eighth Street Bookshop, then located at MacDougal and 8th.

This translation by Hazel Barnes of the University of Colorado soon filled his days and nights with profound pleasure.

2.

The original Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? was still upon the lavatory wall when first he began to lounge by night at The Figaro. In later years he realized he should have gotten his art restorer friend at the Met to sneak in late one woozy

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night and to photograph it in situ, to date it, and then to remove it and frame it, as a literary/cultural relic of enormous worth, say, to a rich Texas library collecting Albeenia.

The graffiti quality was high indeed above that plumbing, and the young man felt emboldened to place his first upon any wall since certain innocent chalkings urging action relative to an aerially traversing jelly doughnut he had placed on the bulletin board outside the scoutmaster's tent at scout camp.

"Ich bin Ich" was his first attempt, rendered in incredibly witty Pollockian blob-whirls in the new breed of colored felt-tip pens just then coming on the market. Ahh sweet wit! he exclaimed to himself, hastening from the tense area of scribble. It was almost immediately effaced, however, with a nervously-scrawled "I See You Leave, Therefore I Am."

Not for nothing had he several well-thumbed books on self-hypnosis. That night he put himself under to try to reconstruct—he considered it as cool as Camus' Stranger remembering the exact cracks on his bedroom vase—to reconstruct the exact circumstances of his leaving the lavatory, and who, as his mind tried to picture it, was lurking outside to dash in and ruin his work. He was sad when, after instructing himself to write out the name, the name Robert Rauschenberg appeared on the jot-pad; a name of course which had, at that time, no meaning for him. In later years he chalked the name up to an act of satire, and possibly of ridicule, performed by the hypnotic In-itself somehow acting against the For-itself.[1]

[1] The For-itself, acting through consciousness, exists just slightly in the future, and is absolutely free. Yet if the In-itself, in Sartre's view unconnected to any numinal noumena, should somehow possess an ability to act, or to express its own freedom, then it could be interpreted as having pre-existent numinal transcendence. For the In-itself should never have been able to cause a false answer, even as a joke, to a post-hypnotic question. Or perhaps our writer's unconscious heard the name of the culprit who erased his graffito, without the conscious mind being able to retain it, and it was retrieved during hypno-self-interrogation.

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Although, when you consider it, that would have been an act of religion, and religion—well there were not enough of ha-ha's for that in those days, as you recall.

3.

He was not more than one-tenth through the 634 pages before he became a confirmed Sartrean. It was just about that time that, as if simulating a miracle, he met his very own Juliette Greco, his future wife Huguette, on the street outside Rienzi's—her Juliette Greco-like eyes outlined in existential black kohl and minuended with daring green eye shadow; and she wore a leather vest over a black dancer's stocking that could trigger off sonnets as she strode into a packed coffeehouse tense with poets.

How similar it was! he thought, picturing Mr. Sartre in a café drinking coffee coffee coffee in his scruffily furred leather flight jacket, blind-eyed, writing vast books in the din of drinks and derision. So it was! he thought, that he himself sat attired in an imaginary leather jacket, quickly finishing his Calculus IV assignment, in order to get at the more important work, while the chatterers and mañana-ites seated around him in The Figaro wailed onward. What important work? Why, his poetry, and let us not forget his first work in the field of drama, a "skit-play" in the Beckettian mode of humorous no redemption.

But we are ahead of ourselves, for we must first examine the transformation of the oeuvres aux cabinets. For there was no question as to which came first, the lavatory or the skit. His passion for his new found philosophy swept him away, and he began to fill his conversations with Sartrespeak. His friends were witty enough about it, even tolerant, for there was no way to escape it. Not even in the Figaro's lavatory.

"being-looked-at. . . . the only way in which I can make

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proof of the Other's freedom, p. 393-94," was the first message he wrote, as near to Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? as decently could be accomplished without overlapping, and then he festooned the periphery of the words with appropriate eyeballage, with trailing tear ducts in the Egyptian mode.

There were 123 other apothegms from Jean-Paul which he applied to the walls, but we shall not air them here. His favorite had been, he thought the marvelous "—in reality, the Not"—a tetrad with which he studded his conversation in those days. Friends would anticipate his saying it and join in on "the Not," which usually he exclaimed most vigorously.

He began to string together his quotes. He visualized characters speaking them. It was not long before he was sitting burning dialogue into a notebook like wax paper afire. The result was what he called a skit, never published as far as we know, but we are aware of the university library which subsequently purchased the notebook. The skit had a ponderous title: *We Are Alone, With No Excuses*, and you could probably trigger some tears to this day asking people who participated in dramatic readings from his work some caffeinated 4 A.M. of long ago.

Odd to say it now, but the theme of the skit was in praise of ethical, atheistic, social, even socialistic, DREAD. Not the ghoulish Fear of the coming war years, but groovy old fashioned Dread. Existenz Dread. Nothingness—but adorned Nothingness. The Niceties of Néantization. He would have bet his life, as he sat there reading over his third expresso and his 11th or 12th tiny Schimmelpenninck cigar, that Ethical Hopelessness, as he translated the message, would have swept the world, and that war was ever banned.

The skit was the beginning for him of a career in the theater. The technique of using lines from *Being and Nothingness* he later perfected in his *Blake*, his off-Broadway smash musical

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biography of the bard in which "Blakefolk" reenacted scenes from that poet's later prophecies, and to which the writer had only to add tunes, and linkage, and verbal glue, to fashion it into a condition of smashhood.

4.

Something, maybe the thrill of acceptance he received for his verse, his plays, his academic work, placed the Sartrean researches in subsequent years into neglect. Not that he ever really forgot his first philosophical love in times of crisis.

For instance, after the first assassination, in a daze he picked up *L'Être et le Néant* and reconsidered its contents. By that time he had obtained the French edition, and used the Barnes translation as a sort of crib. The rather garish black and yellow dust jacket of the American edition looked strange on the table of The Gaslight both nights of assassination weekend, as he sat studying with tear reddened eyes, waiting for Phil Ochs to sing his topical songs. It was the era of the Topical Song and Phil was, in his opinion, its most brilliant partisan. He had followed Mr. Ochs' career most attentively, and knew by heart his repertoire of songs which tracked, almost issue by issue, the events of the Kennedy years, from the Bay of Pigs to the recent D.C. civil rights march. And he knew, even in this time of tears and angst, that Phil would not modulate his performance, and it was so. If there was ever a time, he felt, to drain your tears upon the gnomon of Existential Hopelessness, those two days were the ones.

5.

The years oozed past, during which he devoted considerable effort toward warding off Néant relative to his career. His approach was direct. Did not the master himself slave as the editor of Les Temps Modernes? So, he himself enslaved himself in the editing, and even in the pasting up, of a quarterly

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bearing the fine neantian name, The Mouth—which featured initially his own short verse dramas. As fame implanted his name, however, he no longer felt it ethically sound to print so much of his own. Besides, hardly a lunch began to go by without some offer or other from some serious editor of serious checkbook.

If he did not pay attention to Sartre's works, nevertheless he felt their lives were twined upon the same staff of time. Did not both of them work fiercely against the war in Vietnam? There was never an article in the Times about Sartre's exploits that did not thrill him. One part of his mind spritzed its own frontal lobes with "être-ecstasy" when he read that Sartre was turning down the Nobel Prize for literature for '64. It was such an example to him that just two years later, during the bombing of the North, he very nearly turned down tenure as a protest. *Very* nearly.

Later, when Jean-Paul took a stand for intellectual freedom in Cuba, the writer purred with approval. "Neither com-symp or cap-blimp shall I be," he noted in his idea-pad the morning he read Sartre's text. When was that? he later tried to recall, in the middle of an anecdote. Let's see, it was before the Collected Plays came out, and it must have been after I filed to have my arrest record for the march on the Pentagon expunged, so it must have been around '68.

There was a glaring negative, however. He had always sent review copies of his books and issues of *The Mouth* over to S's pad on the Rue Bonaparte. But it was a good thing he had never told anyone about it, because there was a strange silence, unutterably embarrassing, in the matter of receiving reply. Who knows, a letter from Sartre might have attuned his mind to such supernal frequencies that he might have reached some new plateau of brilliant inspiration. But there was nothing, nada, nicht, not, néant.

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6.

Then the years really oozed past. He consented to give the children the rudiments of Christian training. His wife on occasion drove them to Sunday school, and she herself attended the Washington Square Friends Meeting. To garnish the instruction there was an occasional Vacation Bible School while they summered in Margaretville.

Religion boomed. He became aware that the State of New York, as the decade drew to a close, had become a garden of religious cults. At first he joined the chorus of chucklers, you know, laughing in the Lion's Head about Swami Two-car-garaji, Master Float Mind, Queen Write-Check, Sir Majesty Hypno-Feel, and others too numerous to mention.

Then, certain of his friends were sucked in. There was one that, based on information from a book on Russian experiments in such matters, warmed to the subject of auras. He became involved with a certain Dr. Natasha Bell, A.T.D. (Doctor of Auran Toponomy), who would read the left side of your aura in the first session, for only 75 dollars. The right side was reserved, because it was more difficult to discern, the Dr. informed them, for the second session, at 125 dollars. And then, if you wanted a further follow-up "holistic auran toponomical read-out"—the price was way up there in 3 figures.

Among the many rituals of these sects, it was obvious to him that the prime ritual was that of Writing Out The Check, a ritual ever on the mind of the swami. Perhaps he was being unfair. It was the karma of napalm, his friends assured him. The sects were unstoppable. Had the Roman authorities been able to stop processions of weirdos trailing behind votive marches of the statue of the Syrian Mother? Still, he hated to see both the Catskill resorts business and the number of Catholic monks go adwindle, because that meant the sects

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could march in waving recently-snagged trust funds and savings accounts and snap up the ivy-arbored monasteries and groovy old hotels cheap.

The final mote in his eye was the Kirilian foot. You went of course to the local health food store to purchase buckwheat groats for kasha varniskes—but one day he had to hold his stomach, passing the window display of what was billed as a Kirilian photograph, shrined in an expensive sort of oaken frame you find for service or prom photos, of the resident guru's foot (the owner of the store naturally), surrounded by censers, bells and relics of worship (including recordings of his Holiness singing liturgies in the former Benedictine monastery, now home of the sect).

Day one of the foot display he paused to stare. The picture looked a little like oil stains in the puddles of the parking lot. There was a series of blue blobs, some with pink inner subblobs. Due to the blobular array, a big blue blob with four smaller ones declining to the left, it was apparent the photo was of the Saint's left toes rather than, as the lettering indicated, the foot itself. Like, the leftfooted path, o seeker.

It wasn't but months later that his very own children burned him. They threw off their hesitant Christian mantle, and adopted the garb of the New Age Storefront of Christendom —that is, white robes with sashes of army surplus cartridge belts. One day there were two chattering sons in the house. The next day: silence. No contact from them, no phone calls for money, no advice. Two hundred and fifty thousand, which he figured he had spent in their care and education and travel, pfffft.

He reproached himself. He should have known. He should even have predicted it a year ago when Jean had told him about being assaulted by leaflet-crazed Jesus freaks as he tried to sneak from the front entrance of Camp Ank-A-Dar for

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some forbidden beer—shades of the father, shades of the son.

The condition soon verged near criminality. Because they had owned the controlling factors, that is, the guitar amps and the sound system, his two sons had been the backbone of the Existence Precedes Essence Blues Band. Under the influence of the New Age Storefront of Christendom, the band had gospelized itself under the name The Ray of J. The Ray of J commenced appearances at the coffeehouse owned by the sect, and then, as we have said, they embarked on what the cult called a Negative Familial Trajectory; they disappeared.

Late one night the recording studio in the basement was stripped, and all vestiges of rock paraphernalia vanished. It was enough to make you call upon St. Sartre.

The turmoil, the religions, the loss of the boys—all this led to an idea for a National Endowment for the Arts grant proposal, which he jotted into his day-idea book. *The Growing Influence of the Culty-Wulties in the Decline of American Hegemony* was his first title, but then he inserted Religious Sects for Culty-Wulties in the actual proposal. He sketched a chapter outline, based in great part on the numerous cultic brochures lately flooding the mailbox. The boys had subscribed to magazines, or otherwise had attracted the sects' attention, and apparently there was a communality of mailing lists among these groups. There was even talk that they shared a membership computer, but given his experience with quarreling anger-filled left wing splinter groups, he thought this a bit paranoid.

It was one of those projects that did not get beyond two file folders. The problem was this, that he would have had to grovel among them, to memorize, even sympathize with, their beliefs, to go eye-to-eye with "flicker-eyed sickies," as he phrased it. Above all else he didn't want to arm-chair the

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culty wulties, to give them the polished fingernail Golden Bough treatment. Sweaty, tedious investigation was the only course. The labor would have been enormous; he certainly would want the result to be as scintillating as Lucian laughing at the Cynics, so he abandoned the book.

And then there was the divorce.

7.

Huguette was living in sin with some twerp electronic musician, age about 25—and he was horrified to recall that the guy had been creator of a sound tape used in his play, *Blake*, and that was how Huguette and the electron had arrived in each other's arms. It was that damned opening night party, and that damned loft bed with the Orchard Street gossamer curtains hanging down on all sides, and the damned yatta yatta yatta of immoral musicians.

For years he had watched her appreciative eyes glaze-gaze upon the hirsute grad students. That was fine. But some Johnny One-amp whose idea of art was to make tape loops of hyperamplified sounds of the birthing splittings of insect egg cases? Uhk.

Each accused the other of abandoning the other. This was one of the wonders of the modern break-up. Both could shout, to friend or foe, "Ditched! Ditched! Ditched!"

8.

You know how the books of youth and college often stand together on the subject's shelves, often on the upper shelves. They are usually a fine and intelligent collection amidst the swirl of fluffy temporality that later accumulates in the subject's library.

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Sometimes the youthful books seem incongruous. In his and Huguette's library, for instance, Kerouac's *Dr. Sax* stood wedged between issues of the Journal of Inhibitive Desensitization. A not-read-in-a-long-time collected T.S. Eliot lay contiguous to total and complete collections of Vonnegut, Burgess, Mailer, Albee, Nabokov, and Updike. Especially Updike.

When he and Huguette split the spoils, it was simple. He took only the books of his youth, and of course all the foreign editions of his own works plus, neglected for over 13 years, his copies of *Being and Nothingness*. She took the rest. Left behind were some 375 dollars worth of ten dollar items delineating the fall of the Nixon White House. One of Huguette's boyfriends later burned them during a concert he had read about in the Voice, during which the flames' roar had been amplified and fed through a synthesizer and mixed with an actual tape of the take-off of Air Force One on resignation day.

9.

Some attention should be paid to the moment of his conversion. You know how your books look in those open-topped Gristedes boxes, in a neat row, when you move, just before loading them into the U-Haul. So his own meager horde of books appeared. Chance, perhaps even one of the fates, prevailed, and the nice box formerly holding Kellogg's FROOT FLAVORED LOOPS lay in a spot near his bed. Huguette was gone, and he also was soon to flee the desolate pad.

As it happened, the Froot Loops container held some of his earliest tomes, his calculus texts, a couple on number theory, Loeb Classics editions of Homer and the Greek lyric poets, some tattered issues of Beatitude, all of Beckett, and, gulp, his *Being and Nothingness.*

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Please don't chuckle when we relate that he felt a mystic tremor run through his upper stomach, much like the stirrings of tender love, as he lay in forlornity upon the dark bed. The book seemed to beckon to him, or even to beacon forth a form of radiance. Read me, o earthling! it seemed to say.

He reached over and picked out the book, humming a tune very similar to Give Me That Old Time Religion, and then there was no doubt, as the words "it's good enough for me," were formed in the stillness. No more cults, he muttered, no more superstition, no more moon-moan. He read straight through till dawn. He was a Born Again Sartrean. Hallelujah!

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

T. Coraghessan Boyle's fiction has been published in *Esquire, Fiction, TriQuarterly,* and *Quest/77* among others. He has just completed a book of short fiction.

Don Bredes' novel *Hard Feelings* was published in February by Atheneum. He is now at Stanford University writing a second novel with the aid of a Wallace Stegner Fellowship.

William Burroughs is currently at work on a new novel entitled *Cities of the Red Night* and is collaborating with Terry Southern on the screenplay for his novel *Junky*.

David Glines is a painter, printmaker and writer who teaches at UCLA. His work has appeared in *The Musical Newsletter* and *The North American Review*.

Barbara Milton lives and writes in New York City. This is her first publication.

Ed Sanders has recently completed a collection of "short stories à clé" about domestic intelligence in America entitled *Dom-Int*.

Alan Ziegler's work has appeared in *American Poetry Review, The Village Voice, The Falcon, Carolina Quarterly, The Ardis Anthology, Poetry Now* and *The Paris Review*.

POETRY

Phil Boiarski's poems have appeared in a number of literary magazines and have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize Anthology and the Borestone Mountain Awards. This is his second appearance in *The Paris Review*.

Vic Coccimiglio, a 1975 graduate of Denison University where he studied writing under Paul Bennett, will soon have poetry appearing in *The North American Review, Abraxas,* and *Arete*.

John J. Elliott lives and works in Buffalo, N.Y. He has had poems published in *Mafkikker* and *Leevs,* two small literary magazines.

Nikos Engonopoulos has been a professor of art in Athens for nearly thirty-five years. He is regarded as one of Greece's most outstanding contemporary artists.

Richard Grossman will soon have a book of poems about business entitled *Tycoon Boy* published by Kayak. The poems in this issue are from a bestiary in progress.

Geof Hewitt, 33, lives in Vermont. He has recently completed *The Self-Employment Book,* to be released by Rodale Press in the Fall.

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Gerd Friedrich Jonke's first book, *Geometrische Heimatroman* ("A Geometric Regional Novel"), appeared in 1969. The poems printed here are from two 1970 collections: *Beginn einer Verzweiflung* ("First Signs of Despair"), published by Residenz Verlag on Salzburg, and *Glashaus Besichtigung* ("Greenhouse Touring"), published by Surhkamp Verlag of Frankfurt.

Márton Kálasz was born in 1934 in Somberek, Hungary. He has worked in cooperatives, been head of several cultural centers, and a reader for Europa publishing house. His volumes of poetry include *Hajnali Szekerek* ("Carts at Dawn"), 1955; *Unnep Elott* ("Before the Feast"), 1961; *Ejfeli Kormenet* ("Procession at Midnight"), 1970; *Hirek Argyelusnak* ("New for Argylus"), 1975. "Legacy" was first printed in "Procession at Midnight".

Jascha Kessler has recently had his third book of poetry, *In Memory of the Future*, published by Kayak Press. His other publications include *Whatever Love Declares* and *After the Armies Have Passed.*

Greg Kosmicki is a graduate student of English at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. His work has appeared in *Alicorn, Choomia, Corduroy, P-A-N,* and *Pebble.*

R.S. Levine teaches English at Stanford University. A 1975 graduate of Columbia College, he is currently at work on a novel.

John Logan's work has appeared in *The New Yorker, The Hudson Review,* and many other magazines. He has also published seven books of poetry and a children's book. Logan is founder and co-editor of *Choice,* a magazine of poetry and graphics, and has been the poetry editor of *The Critic* and *The Nation.*

Herbert Lovett is a student at Harvard University, a psychologist at Danvers State Hospital and a consultant at the Hogan Regional Center. He is currently finishing a song cycle and *Five Pieces for Orchestra.*

Martin McKinsey is presently a construction worker in Boston.

John Michel graduated from St. John's University (Minnesota) and has studied in Freiburg and Budapest. He teaches part-time at the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

Ellen Nations' translation "The Pelicans" by Raymond Radiquet appeared in *Dramatiko* #18. She is currently working on an anthology of work translated from the French of lesser-known writers and artists. She lives in Montreal.

Frank O'Hara died in 1966. Grey Fox Press will publish two new posthumous collections of Frank O'Hara's poetry, *Early Writing* and *Poems Retrieved,* this spring.

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A. Poulin, Jr. is the author of a book of poems entitled *In Advent,* editor of *Contemporary American Poetry* and translator of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* and *The Sonnets to Orpheus* recently published by Houghton Mifflin. He is also editor-publisher of BOA Editions, a new press that will publish books and chapbooks of poetry.

Gisèle Prassinos published her first surrealist texts at the age of fourteen in *Documents 34.* The following year her "La Sauterelle Arthritique" was released, and this has been followed by numerous booklets, short stories and novels.

Kenneth Rexroth's *New Poems* recently received the Copernicus Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. **Lady Ise** was a ninth century poet and the concubine of the Emperor Uda. **Princess Nukada** lived in the seventh century and is considered the greatest of the woman poets of the Omi period. **Hazui Shizue** was born in 1900 and studied with Kitahara Hakushu, a leading poet of the early twentieth century.

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926). These three prose poems, which Rilke originally wrote in French between 1920 and 1924, were first published in the second volume of *Samtliche Worke* (Insel-Verlag, 1957). "Cemetery" incorporates, almost verbatim, the epitaph that Rilke wrote for his own tombstone.

Dennis Saleh's most recently book of poetry is *Palmway* (Ithaca House); he is also co-editor of *Just What America Needs, Another Poetry Anthology* (Wadsworth). "Chameleon Ranch" is from a book forthcoming from New Rivers Press. Saleh lives in Seaside, California.

Gary Soto's first collection, "The Elements of San Josquito", received the U.S. Award of the International Poetry Forum for 1976 and was recently published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. He lives in California.

Albert Stainton is currently working with the Maine Poetry-in-the-Schools program as well as compiling a book-length collection of poems. He has work forthcoming in *Dakota Territory, Poetry Now* and other magazines.

Judit Tóth graduated from Budapest University in 1959. For a time she was Poetry Editor of *NagyVilag,* a Hungarian journal of foreign literature in translation. Volumes of her verse include *Tuzfalak* (Partition Walls), 1963; *Ket varos* (Two Cities), 1972; *After Vissazahivasa* (Calling Space Back), 1975. "Seine Wharves Scutheast" is from *Two Cities.*

ART

Alexa Grace's illustrations have appeared in *Harper's, The New York Times, Ms., The Village Voice, Viva* and elsewhere. Her work has been reviewed in *Arts* and *Art World,* and she has had numerous exhibitions in recent years.

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Richard Haas received his B.A. in Art from the University of Wisconsin and his M.A. from the University of Minnesota. He has taught at Bennington College since 1968 and is currently serving on the Art Commission of the City of New York.

Susan Rothenberg received her B.A. in Fine Arts from Cornell in 1966 and her M.A. from George Washington University/Corcoran Gallery program in 1967. Her work was most recently shown at the Willard Gallery in New York City.

INTERVIEW

David Hayman is a professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He has published interviews in *TriQuarterly*, *Contemporary Literature*, and *The Iowa Review*. His books include *Ulysses: The Mechanics of Meaning* and *A First Draft of Finnegans Wake* (edited with Clive Hart).

David Michaelis is a student at Princeton University and an Associate Editor of this magazine. His interview with James T. Farrell was recently published by *Transatlantic*.

George Plimpton has two books appearing later this year—*One More July* and *Shadow Box*.

Richard L. Rhodes is a Contributing Editor to *Playboy*. His novel, *Holy Secrets* is to be published by Doubleday in January, 1978. He lives in Kansas City, Missouri.

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"I really didn't enjoy it."
—*Janet Brown, Brooklyn, MA*

"I enjoyed it immensely. There is something of a sensibility akin to Grace Paley's at times. The authority of the prose is extraordinary."
—*Arnold Krupat, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville*

"I find it fascinating."
—*Len Webster, West Midlands, England*

"Personally, I can say that I could have written half of your book, not because I have your talent, but only because I feel, think and believe almost everything you have put into words so beautifully."
—*Ginette Cassara, New York*

"I was captivated."
—*Edith Fels, Philadelphia*

"Only thing I objected to was the difficulty I had keeping the haphazardly introduced characters straight. But even here some came out beautifully developed. All in all, I must admit you are a writer of considerable talent."
—*Morris K. Jacobson, Rockaway, NY*

"It's intricate structure and delicate texture make rigorous and delightful reading."
—*David Wing, El Cajon, CA*

"It wasn't fun and games. I can see how lots of people wouldn't understand it. It was very intelligent, and most people aren't."
—*Diane Steen, Seattle*

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